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HOME FOLKS

BY

CLOVIS G. CHAPPELL

AUTHOR OF "THE VILLAGE TRAGEDY," "SERMONS ON BIBLICAL CHARACTERS," "MORE SERMONS ON BIBLICAL CHARACTERS," "SERMONS ON NEW TESTAMENT CHARACTERS," "SERMONS ON OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERS"

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To my Wife
MRS. CECIL CHAPPELL

Who has made the romantic dreams of my youth more than come true, this volume is affectionately dedicated.

P150

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SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matt. 19:5, 6.)

I

Every thoughtful man will agree that the marriage question is one of vital importance. In fact, it is about the most important question that confronts the American people to-day.

1. It is a matter of vital importance to the individual and to society as a whole. This is true because marriage is the foundation of the home. If the marriage tie is weak, the home will rest upon a weak foundation. Just in proportion as the marriage relation goes upon the rocks the home becomes a wreck. If the marriage tie is a thing of sand, then the home will rest upon a foundation thoroughly insecure. When the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon the home thus founded, it will surely fall, and complete will be the wreck of it.

Now it is only a truism to say that our whole

social order stands or falls with the home. The home is the fountain from which issue the streams that make up the great Mississippi of our national life. If the fountains are pure, the river of our national life will be pure. If the fountains are poisonous, the river must also be poisonous. What we are in our church life, in our civic and national life, depends upon the home. The home is either the savior or the destroyer of civilization. And since the home depends for its security on the marriage tie, my subject is at once seen to be one of tremendous importance.

2. This is a question of great importance to those immediately concerned—that is, the husband and wife. It is hard to speak about marriage to a mixed audience. It is hard to get an audience to take the speaker seriously when marriage is mentioned. This subject is usually "born in a grin and smothered in a laugh." It is continually a theme for jests. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that since many speak of it jestingly some perform it in the same way. There are those who seem to make a kind of blind-man's-buff out of it, grabbing and marrying whomsoever they catch in the mad game. But in spite of this, it is the most important decision that you will ever be called upon to make, save your decision to follow Jesus Christ. You will

likely find either your heaven or your hell in the one that you marry. Therefore, for you it is a tremendously serious matter.

II

What is the basis of a successful marriage?

In seeking an answer to this question, I think it is wise to turn to the Word of God. Of course we can give hospitality to all wholesome instruction that comes from other sources. But I believe an earnest effort to follow out the divine plan in this high business would go far to prevent the disasters that are taking place in the married life of to-day. Here, as elsewhere, Jesus Christ is the supreme authority. Therefore, let us hear him.

1. The first fact that he makes clear to us in the text is that marriage is a divine institution. It is not merely a civil contract. It is no business transaction like an exchange of property. It is no matter of buying and selling after the order of the market place. It is a holy partnership entered into according to the will of God. The first marriage was performed in Eden. The temple was the winsome beauties of a garden, the wedding march was played by God's choir in feathers, and God himself officiated at the altar.

And since then we have been taught to say at every wedding: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Now, if we conceived of marriage as a divine institution, many marriages now being made would be impossible; for to conceive of the wedded pair as having been brought together by God is to make marriage impossible except for reasons upon which God himself can smile. And what is that one reason? It is love of a man for a woman and of a woman for a man. People who come together for any other reason are not truly married.

But when we face the situation as it is, we find men and women being married for almost every trifling reason. There are marriages for convenience. Some marry to get a thrill. Some marry for social position. Some marry for money. Some marry for reasons even more base and unworthy. I myself have performed ceremonies when I had a considerable suspicion that it was little less than mockery to say: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." I fear that it would have been more appropriate to have said, "What the devil hath joined together, let not man put asunder," for they will get asunder themselves if you will only give them a little time.

2. The second fact that Jesus Christ brings out about the marriage relationship is that it is supreme. It takes precedence over all other human relationships. The relationship between parent and child is one exceedingly intimate and exceedingly holy. The Bible has much to say about this relationship. We are commanded to honor father and mother. We are taught that this is the first commandment with promise. We are solemnly warned, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." But there is a relationship more intimate and binding than this, and that is the relationship between husband and wife. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife."

For this reason, if you expect to make the most out of your wedded life, your husband must come first. If you expect as a husband to make the most out of it, your wife must come first. If you find that you love your father and mother better than you love the man that you are going to marry, then you had better not marry him. The same is true for the man. Whenever I see a married couple unable to leave the home of father and mother I get uneasy. I am afraid you are not putting first the one who has a right

to be first. Besides it is often a foolish misappropriation of rivers and mountains not to use some of them to separate you from your "in-laws."

This does not mean, of course, that in marrying you are to break with any of the old loves of the home of your childhood. They ought to grow sweeter and tenderer and more binding through the years. But it does mean that if there comes a day when a choice must be made between these old relationships and the new one into which you have entered, you must side with the new. My firm conviction is that there is no other sure basis of a successful marriage; and if you are not willing to enter into the marriage relationship on this basis, then you owe it both to yourself and the one that you expect to marry to remain out of it.

3. Jesus taught that marriage makes the husband and wife one. "Therefore they are no more twain, but one flesh." And, mark you, this oneness does not mean simply an idle or empty figure of speech. It stands for a most profound and important reality.

(1) The wedded pair is to be one in their mutual self-giving. I speak of the woman that married me as "my wife." I have a right to so speak. I asked her to give herself to me and

she consented. She consented with open eyes. She knew that in so doing she was giving up her own name; that name that suggests all that is manly in her father and all that is queenly and winsome in her mother. She knew that she was giving up her childhood's home, all those dear scenes that from day to day had caught the color of her life and sympathized with her joys and her sorrows. She knew that she was giving me her very self. Therefore, I have a right to call her "my wife." But just in the same way she has the right to speak of me as "my husband." She no more gave herself to me than I gave myself to her. She owns me. I no more own these two hands than she owns me. Our self-giving was mutual, if according to the divine plan.

Now it is only this mutual self-giving that can insure a successful marriage. There are times when all the giving is on one side. I have seen husbands and wives both of whom were in love with the same one. Sometimes they were both in love with the wife and sometimes both were in love with the husband. But either way it is likely to spell disaster. If the man gives all, then he has a right to expect all. And the woman who divides her heart by petty flirtations with others is a cheat and a fraud. And if she divides it by giving herself in part to another, she is to be

despised. And the same is true of a man. If you ask for everything, you must be willing to give everything. There is no substitute for this mutual self-giving.

A young fellow came to my study some months ago very much excited. He had been married to a lovable girl for possibly half a year. He sat down and said very excitedly: "Well, I suppose I am going to get a divorce." "What is wrong?" I asked him. "I went home," he said indignantly, "and found my wife reading 'Billy and the Major.'" (It so happened that this gentleman was a "high brow." He read only heavy stuff and it seemed to him preposterous that his wife should not read the same kind of literature.) "Therefore," he said, "I took the book and put it in the stove."

I looked at this red-headed gentleman in amazement. "What," I asked, not without indignation, "do you expect of a wife? Did you marry her in order for her to fling away her personality and become a second edition of yourself? One like me," I continued, "is quite enough in my family. Evidently you want a satellite and not a wife. You want somebody that will give everything to you, even her personality, while you give nothing." Of course such marriages must end in failure.

(2) Then those wedded are to be one in their material interests. What they have of this world's goods is not his, neither is it hers—it is theirs. When you stood at the altar and put the ring on her hand, this is what you said: "With this ring I thee wed, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow." You may not have had much to give, but what you did have you solemnly promised to share with her. And a man who will be stingy and niggardly and skinflint with his wife is not fit to be a husband. What is yours is hers, and she has the same right to it that you have.

On the other hand, it devolves upon the wife to be an intelligent partner. She will be willing to share. She will not demand that she have all. She will be willing to "costly her habit as their purse can buy." She will not look upon her husband as an unlimited meal ticket. If he is poor, she will be willing to share his poverty with him. Not only will she be willing, but she will count it a privilege. She will feel herself wronged if she is not so trusted and so relied upon.

Now I know that all women cannot be so trusted. There are not a few men to-day who are bankrupts because of extravagant wives. There are some in the penitentiary to-day because of extravagant wives. There are some

who have gone out the suicide's door because of extravagant wives. But there are men who have climbed to wealth, and far more who have been happy in poverty because of the woman who was glad to be one with them in their material interests.

(3) Then they are to be one in their spiritual interests. They are to be one in their devotion to God. I know there have been happy marriages without this. But it takes this to guarantee the highest possible success. Where a man and woman are truly married to each other and also truly wedded to God, then there is every reason why their home should take on some of the hallowed and holy joy that belongs to the home eternal. But it is a tragic mistake when the newly married pair go to establish their home if they concern themselves about every kind of furniture except that which is of most vital importance—the family altar. There is nothing that will go farther toward making marriage successful than a firm devotion to God on the part both of the husband and the wife.

It may be, young woman, that your husband is a Christian and you are not. You may feel kindly toward Jesus Christ. You may want your husband to carry on and carry on bravely. But remember, he is not likely to do so unless you

help him. It is very rare indeed to see a man, however truly loyal to Christ he was in the beginning of his wedded life, keep that loyalty unimpaired through a space of years without the sympathetic help and support of his wife. And remember this, that some day you are going to want your husband to be a man that loves God. Some day you are going to want an arm on which to lean that is being strengthened by the Everlasting Arm.

But while the husband sometimes has to go alone, it is far more often the wife. It is a great tragedy, young man, when you consent to have this holy partnership between you and your wife confined purely to the things that are of the earth. She can only find her highest happiness in fellowship with Christ. She can only find it as she shares that high fellowship with you. Surely you would not want to hinder her. Surely you would not be unmanly enough to want to put all the responsibility of the religious life of the home on her shoulders. Surely you would not be willing to carry your weight of responsibility in the material interests of the home and then prove a slacker and a coward in the deeper spiritual interests. You are to be one in your devotion to God.

4. The fourth fact that Jesus brings out about

the marriage relation is that it is for life. It is not a temporary arrangement. It is not a thing of a month or a year or a dozen years. It is not to last until the first quarrel or until the first time you get your feelings hurt. It is to last till the sunset. There is no right divorce save that "written in terms of green grass on the grave of one of the contracting parties."

How we need to believe this! If we only believed it, we would not enter into this relationship except we loved well enough to be willing to live together for life. We would not enter into it flippantly and blindly. We would not enter into it, as our Discipline says, "save advisedly and discreetly and in the fear of God." We would realize that the flowers that the bride carries on her wedding day are just as solemn and just as sacred as those that will lie upon her still heart when the journey is over. It is a permanent relationship "for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and health till death do us part."

III

Here, then, is what marriage means in the mind of Jesus. It is a divine institution. It is the supreme human relationship. It means the one-

ness of the wedded pair—a oneness that is to last to the end of life. Shall we take our Lord seriously or shall we not? To fail to do so is to open the door to wretchedness both for ourselves and others. To comply is to give ourselves a chance at the deepest secret of human blessedness. To such sorrows and losses may come. But they will not impoverish. They will only lead to greater riches. Such a marriage was that of Lanier. Hence he could sing that winsome song to which many of us, thank God, can give a hearty Amen:

"In the heart of the Hills of Life, I know
Two springs that with unbroken flow
Forever pour their lucent streams
Into my soul's far Lake of Dreams.

Not larger than two eyes, they lie
Beneath the many-changing sky
And mirror all of life and time,
—Serene and dainty pantomime.

Shot through with lights of stars and dawns,
And shadowed sweet by ferns and fawns,
—Thus heaven and earth together vie
Their shining depths to sanctify.

O Love, O Wife, thine eyes are they,
—My springs from out whose shining gray
Issue the sweet celestial streams
That feed my life's bright Lake of Dreams.

Oval and large and passion-pure
And gray and wise and honor-sure;

Soft as a dying violet-breath,
Yet calmly unafraid of death;

Thronged, like two dove-cotes of gray doves,
With wife's and mother's and poor-folk's loves,
And home-loves and high glory-loves
And science-loves and story-loves,

And loves for all that God and man
In art and nature make or plan,
And lady-loves for spidery lace
And broideries and supple grace

And diamonds and the whole sweet round
Of littles that large life compound,
And loves for God and God's bare truth,
And loves for Magdalen and Ruth.

Dear eyes, dear eyes and rare complete—
Being heavenly-sweet and earthly sweet,
—I marvel that God made you mine,
For when He frowns, 'tis then ye shine!''

CAUSES OF FAILURE—BEFORE MARRIAGE

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matt: 19:6.)

To-night we are to discuss some of the reasons for marital failure. We are going to confine ourselves in this discussion to the pre-marital causes. We are going to speak of those sins and follies of which we all are often guilty before marriage that tend to militate against our making a success of this beautiful adventure. For there is a way of spoiling our chances for a happy marriage by what we do before we stand under the orange blossoms. It is altogether possible for a young man to throw away his wedding ring before it comes into his possession. It is altogether possible for a young girl to lose her wedding ring before her lover ever slips it upon her finger. In fact, not a few all but wreck their chances for a happy marriage before they come to their wedding day.

I

What, then, are some of the causes of failure? Many marriages fail because of a lack of a right

conception on the part of the bride and groom of what marriage really means. They come to the marriage altar without knowing the nature of the vows that they are to assume. They come with but little appreciation of the meaning and sacredness of the relationship into which they are entering. Oftentimes they are not to blame for this. They are more sinned against than sinning. They are the unfortunate victims of a lack of training on the part of parents and on the part of Sunday school teachers and on the part of pastors.

Many an unhappy marriage would be avoided if the young people were only taught what marriage is according to Jesus Christ. I pointed out to you in my last address the divine conception of marriage. Jesus taught (1) that marriage is not a civil contract, but that it is divine; (2) that it is the supreme relationship—that it takes precedence over all other relationships between man and man; (3) that the husband and wife are one —one in their mutual self-giving, one in their material interests, and one in their spiritual interests; (4) that marriage is for life—that there is no right divorce save that signed by the angel of death. If this conception were only instilled into the minds and hearts of our young people, many a tragedy would be avoided. For lack of

it, many a marriage that might have been successful goes upon the rocks.

II

Another fruitful cause of marital failure is lack of home training. Here, for instance, is a young man who from his infancy has done as he pleased. He has been taught from childhood that if he would stamp his foot hard enough and cry loud enough and quarrel long enough, he could have his own way about almost any matter. He has never learned the fine art of self-sacrifice. He has never known what it is to give up his wishes for those of others. He has never been brought to a real recognition of the fact that other folks have rights. He has been trained from his infancy in the devil's doctrine of self-centeredness.

Then there is a girl brought up after the same fashion. She has been petted and pampered and spoiled. She has been brought to believe that all roads lead to Rome and that she is Rome. I met one such some time ago. I was invited in on her birthday to be present when she was presented with a birthday gift. But it so happened that the gift was not the one upon which she had set her heart. It was a bar pin when she wanted

a ring. So she went into a rage and threw the pin to the floor in the presence of her parents and their visitor. With abject apologies, one of them picked it up and proceeded to do her bidding.

Now it often happens that this young man and this young girl meet, and, according to their own convictions, fall in love. What is the result? In spite of their poor chances, in spite of their lack of training, they may get on. Their love may be genuine enough to teach them the fine graces of patience and forbearance and consideration for others. But there is great danger that such will not be the case. The likelihood is that these two petted and spoiled creatures will want to have their own way as they have always done. Therefore, that will take place which always takes place when an irresistible force hits an immovable body. There will be a catastrophe. There will be a crash that will very likely find its ultimate result in a divorce.

III

A third cause for failure is a lack of real knowledge of each other. Many people marry who, while they are acquainted, while they would recognize one another if they should meet on the

street, yet do not in a real sense know each other.

1. Sometimes this ignorance is born of undue haste in getting married. Now I am not saying that hasty marriages are never successful. I knew a preacher once who went to a town to hold a meeting. The meeting lasted three weeks. Near the beginning of the revival he met the organist for the first time. At the close of the meeting he married her. I do not know that the marriage proved a failure. It may be a great success. But if such is the case, it serves as about the best example I know of the truth of that scripture which declares, "The Lord preserveth the simple."

Hasty marriages are unwise. If you set out to buy a hat, you give yourself an opportunity to examine that hat and to know it thoroughly and to decide whether you will be pleased with it or not. If you are going to buy a farm, you walk over the land and give the matter something of the consideration that its importance demands. If you are going to buy a car, you assure yourself that you are getting value received. But often, when we come to the supreme decision of our lives, we make it hastily and stupidly and without due consideration.

In saying this I am not denying that there is

such a thing as love at first sight. But you must be aware that what oftentimes passes for love at first sight turns out to be something entirely different at second sight. I have noticed again and again that certain people who impressed me very favorably when I first met them, gave quite the opposite impression after I had come to know them more or less intimately. And on the contrary, some who produced quite an unfavorable impression at the beginning came to be objects of deep appreciation and affection after I had come to know their real worth. Give yourself time, or one day you will wake to the realization that the god or goddess to whom you thought you were bowing is, after all, only an image of clay. You will also find that in so worshiping you have gathered dust and dirt not upon your knees only, but upon your soul as well.

2. Sometimes this lack of knowledge is born of deliberate deception. The courtship has been insincere. Now I recognize at once the tendency of a lover to put the best foot foremost. And to that I make no objection. But as you value your hope of happiness, you had better be honest. You will gain nothing by making the one you love think you are what you are not. You will gain nothing by making her think you are richer than you are. It will all come out after

a while and you will realize that your fancied gain was in reality deepest loss. Remember that nothing will stand that is founded upon a lie. A bridge builded with a lie in it is going to collapse. So will a house. So will a home. So will a marriage. There is little chance for happiness when the husband courts a Rachel and finds himself married to a Leah. Nor is there any greater chance when the wife finds that she has been wooed by a prince and wedded to a churl.

IV

Another cause for marital failure is entering upon the marriage relationship with the purpose of reforming the one you marry. This is a bit of folly of which men are seldom guilty. If they know of an evil past or an evil present on the part of the woman that has attracted their attention, that is usually sufficient to cause them to give her up. But oftentimes such is not the case with the woman. She holds on. And no doubt many a man has been won to goodness by a pure woman's love.

But bear this in mind. If you cannot win him to a good life before marriage, do not depend on doing so afterwards. If you cannot help him toward the heights before he gets you, then the

chances are very poor that you will do so after you become his. If he swears in your presence now, the chances are he will swear at you later on. If he comes into your presence now with his breath perfumed with cloves to hide the fumes of liquor, he will come without the cloves later on.

V

The next cause for marital failure that I mention is the secret escapade or the run-away marriage. Now, I am not saying that every couple that marries secretly, or runs away to marry, makes a failure. Many of them are highly successful. There are circumstances, I will admit, in which such a marriage may be justifiable. But having admitted so much, I am firmly convinced that many run-away marriages are unfortunate and are in great danger of ending in disaster.

1. First, let me speak to the girl. If the young man who is waiting upon you insists upon your marrying him secretly or running away with him, the chances are that there is a reason. It may be that that reason is the conviction that you would not marry him if you knew the truth about him, and that your father and mother would not consent if they knew the truth. Or it may be that he is urging you to elope because your father

and mother have already objected. They look upon the marriage as undesirable and forbid you to enter into it.

Now it may be that your parents are both wrong. It may be that they do not understand the fine qualities of your lover as you do. But even assuming that such might be the case, you owe it to them to give their wishes some consideration. They have known you quite as long as he. They are quite as much interested in your happiness as he. They have lived longer and know human nature quite as well as you. Assuming that they are inclined to be back numbers, even then it might be well to give their objections some consideration.

I urge this without any great assurance that you will take my advice in this matter. Young girls who are in love, or who fancy themselves in love, are by no means prone to take advice. If you say anything against the object of their love, they usually take it as a personal affront and make a hero and a martyr out of the one against whom you are warning them. All in all, you had just about as well stand in front of the Niagara Falls and say "Boo" and expect it to run back into Lake Erie as to argue with one of these. But even then I say the objections of your father and mother deserve some consideration.

Suppose you give them this much at least: If they object, then wait until you are of age before you marry. For if you are really in love, you can wait. If he is in love with you, he, too, can wait. If you do not love each other well enough to stand that test, then the chances are that you ought not to marry.

"Unless you can muse in the crowd all day
On the absent face that fixed you,
Unless you can love as the angels may
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you,
Unless you can dream that his love holds fast,
Through behooving and unbehooving
Unless you can die when the dream is past,
O dare not call it loving."

2. Then this word to the young man: In asking a girl to marry against the wishes of her father and mother, you are asking her to be disloyal to a very sacred obligation. Did you ever consider that a girl who could treat her obligations to her parents as a trifling matter might also treat her obligation to you as trifling if sufficient temptation should come upon her? Did you ever consider that a girl who is disloyal to one holy relation might, if sufficient influence were brought to bear, be disloyal to one even more sacred?

A young man came to me recently with this story. A few months after our entrance into the

World War he was secretly married to a girl who belonged to one of the best families in South Carolina. There was no marriage license. The State at that time did not grant any. There was a marriage certificate. But the bride was afraid that her parents might find it, so she tore it up. They lived together at intervals, till her husband joined the army and was sent to France. He had letters from her constantly while in the trenches. When he returned he was mustered out and secured a good position. He then wrote to his wife to come to him, and she replied that she was married to another man. She replied further that she was living in hell already lest her present husband should discover her secret; that if her former husband should come to claim her she would commit suicide. Disloyal in one relation, she had also proved disloyal in another.

VI

The final reason that I give is the squandering of ourselves before we come to meet and love the one we finally marry.

1. Sometimes this squandering takes the form of petty and seemingly innocent flirtations. We fall in love over and over again. Our love affairs are as plentiful as blackberries. Now you

may not agree with me, but it is impossible to eat your bread and have it too. It is also impossible to sow your affections broadcast and keep them in a wise reserve at the same time. Thus it happens that many a young man and young woman squander so much in petty flirtations that when they come to "the supreme sacramental moment of life" they have but little to give. They have made themselves incapable of a really great love.

Take, for example, our stage folk. They are neither better nor worse to begin with than the average. They are just ordinary human beings. But they play at love-making so much that it loses all its sacredness. Caresses become cheap and common things to be dispensed to almost any passer-by. Such a girl, to use a figure from James Lane Allen, becomes like a bunch of grapes above a common path where everybody that passes takes a grape. He who takes does so without reverence and to his own impoverishment. In the golden coin of real and abiding affection such spendthrifts soon become utter bankrupts.

Do you remember the story of the Three Weavers? One morning a weaver said with radiant face: "The angel of suffering came to my house last night and left a little girl baby." "So it was at my house," said the second. "So

it was at mine," said the third. "But that is not all," the first continued. "A good fairy came and left a wonderful loom, with thread of gold. And she said, 'A prince will one day seek to wed your daughter. Out of this golden thread she must weave for him a cloak. If it fits him like the falcon's feathers fit the falcon, they will be married and be forever happy. If it fails to fit, they will not marry, and that day your daughter's heart will break.' "

So the days slipped by into years. The first weaver, as soon as his daughter was old enough, took her upon his knee and explained to her about the wonderful loom with its thread of gold. He told her of the coming of the prince and how she must seek to make herself worthy. The second weaver also told his daughter of the loom with its wondrous thread, but he did so jestingly, as if it were a matter of no serious import at all. The third weaver never mentioned the magic loom with its golden thread. He kept secret about it as if it were some ugly and shameful thing. He said: "It will be time enough to tell her when the prince comes."

At last the prince came. He went to the home where lived the girl who had been taught to treat her magic loom as a joke. She saw the prince and longed for him. But before he came

she had woven a cloak for a page that had passed her window. And then later she had woven another for a squire. Later still she had woven one for a knight. And now, when she sought to weave one for the prince, she found that she had not thread enough to make a cloak for a dwarf. So the prince passed her by, and that day her heart broke.

The prince then went to the home where the father had thought to keep the magic loom a secret. When this father knew of the coming of the prince he hastened to tell his daughter the great honor that had come to her, and that now she must begin her weaving. But he found to his dismay that she had been weaving in secret. One garment she had given to a passing troubadour, another to a country churl. So when she brought forth the garment that she had woven for the prince, it was not large enough for a pigmy. So the prince passed on. And that day, as the fairy had said, her heart broke.

Next he came to the home where the first weaver had taken his girl into his confidence and told her something of the mysteries of the magic loom with its golden thread. And now, under his smile, she wove a cloak for the prince. When he donned it, it fit him as the falcon's feathers fit the falcon. And that day they were married. And

that day life's sweetest dream had its realization. And that day she thanked God that she had not sown her favors broadcast, but had held herself in wise reserve for the crowning moment of her life.

2. At other times this self-squandering goes further than mere flirtations. It goes even to positive shame. This is too often the case with young men. I know many a young fellow who has had his fling and has repented and made a good husband and a good father. But it is a tremendous risk to run. Oftentimes it exacts a terrible punishment. And, saddest of all, the heaviest part of the price is often paid not by the guilty, but by the guiltless.

A fine young fellow, a student of Harvard University, declared that in his young manhood he stepped aside only one time. But that one time was too much. He was a lover of home life and of children. But his home is childless and the healthful, happy girl that he married is little more than an invalid. He is the cause and knows it. Thus this damning conviction tortures him every waking hour of his existence: "I have made of my own body a drawbridge across which the cloven-footed devils of disease have passed for the wrecking of my home."

These, then, are some of the causes that tend

to make a successful marriage impossible. To correct them, we must teach our young people the right conception of marriage. We must teach them the necessity of honesty, of purity, of loyalty to home relations. In other words, we must teach them and help them to be vitally Christian. For if the bride and groom come to the altar in the realization of themselves as temples of the Holy Ghost, if they come not only loving each other, but loving God supremely, then their marriage will be stable and enduring. When the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon that house, it will not fall, for it is founded upon a rock.

CAUSES OF FAILURE—AFTER MARRIAGE

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matt. 19:6.)

Last Sunday evening I spoke to you about some of the follies and sins of which we are guilty before marriage that tend to make a successful marriage impossible. I tried to show you how the wedding ring may be lost before it is worn, how a marriage may be doomed before it is consummated. To-night I am to discuss with you the causes that make for failure after the bride and groom have been made one at the sacred altar. I am going to try to warn you against some of the tragic blunders and sins that cause the loss of the wedding ring after it has been slipped upon the finger of the bride.

I

The first cause I mention is the petty quarrel. The husband and wife do not have to be married long before they come to the realization that they do not see all matters alike. Upon a number of things they disagree. About the earliest tempta-

tion that they face is the temptation to quarrel. This first quarrel usually takes place over some matter of no importance. It is usually born of a difference over a trifle. But this petty quarrel that takes place over a matter of the meanest importance often becomes the sharp point of an entering wedge which by and by divides their hearts and wrecks the holy relationship into which they have entered.

Doubtless it has been pointed out more than once that it is not the big things as a rule that divide us. It is the little things. Big things usually bring us closer together. A great sorrow, a great loss, a great tragedy—these do not make for separation. As a rule they make for a closer bond of union. If husband and wife are called upon to do business in great waters, if they are summoned to pass through some fiery trial, if they have to stagger under the weight of a common burden, if they minister by sickbeds and kneel by new-made graves, they usually come out of the experience with the bonds of their mutual love only strengthened. But with trifles it is different. Again and again we discover that it is the little foxes that spoil the marital vine.

1. Now the trouble with the petty quarrel is that it has a tendency to cease to be petty. After you have had the first quarrel, the second be-

comes far easier. Thus you will find, and some of you have found, that, having started on this road, your quarrels become more numerous and more bitter week by week. Like every other form of sin, it grows. The more you yield to your temper, the easier it is to yield to it. And the more often you unsheathe the sword of your tongue, the greater becomes the deadly skill with which you wield it.

2. Not only does the petty quarrel have a tendency to grow, but there is great danger of its becoming a habit. It is easy to growl and quarrel and nag till such unseemly conduct becomes the order of the day. There are husbands and wives who hardly know what it is to say a civil word to each other. They live and move and have their being in the atmosphere of a perpetual war-whoop. A kind word spoken on the part of either would come as a distinct surprise. They have quarreled so much that they have formed the habit and hardly know how to speak any other language except the language of bitterness and of anger.

3. The petty quarrel is dangerous because, having once given birth to the quarreling habit, a really successful marriage becomes impossible. This I say in spite of the fact that quarreling seems like a very trifling matter on the part of

some married people. There are those who tell you laughingly what fine times they have making up after one of these domestic volcanoes. They even quote Carlton to you:

"And if ever we meet in heaven
I shouldn't think it queer
That we loved each other the better
For the way we quarreled here."

Or they quote a yet greater authority:

"As through the field we went at eve
And plucked the ripened ears,
O we fell out, my wife and I,
O we fell out, I know not why,
And kissed again with tears.

And blessing on the falling out
That all the more endears,
When we fall out with those we love
And kiss again with tears."

But do not be deceived by this good poetry. We do not love each other better, either here or hereafter, for having stabbed each other with our tongues. And as for the "falling out that all the more endears," I am not at all acquainted with it. There may be such, but I have not met it yet. And as for "kissing again with tears," so far as I am personally concerned, I would prefer mine without any such unpalatable sauce.

Believe me, anger and rage that give expression to themselves in an unloosed tongue do not

make for a greater love. They only make for the death of it. It is easy to understand why this is so. When you are angry you do not look for the best in the object of your anger. You look for the worst. You do not compliment, you condemn. Not only do you emphasize the faults of the one with whom you quarrel, but you tend to exaggerate them. You not only point out what is worst, but oftentimes you state what is positively false and what you know to be false. Angered people have an almost irresistible tendency to lie. Naturally, if the one with whom you quarrel answers in kind, you both end by feeling that you have been wounded and that unjustly. You feel that you have been slandered and that by the one who should think of you only the best. Such experiences naturally do not make for love, but for the opposite. Therefore, I say unto you, avoid the petty quarrel.

II

A second reason for marital failure is the childless marriage.

Now I am not speaking of the marriage that is unwillingly childless. Some of the most successful marriages that I know are those where children were wanted, but for some reason never

came. Nor do I mean to assert that the presence of children in the home always guarantees success. I know that such is not the case. Many such marriages fail. But what I do say is that the marriage that is deliberately childless is in great danger of becoming either a complete or partial failure.

1. This is true because children serve as a safeguard to the marriage relationship. Many a husband and wife that would have separated have been held together by the clinging arms of little children. When other influences are seeking to divide, the presence of children has given them the bonds of a common love and of a common responsibility. Husbands and wives do break away in spite of these holy ties. But when a little baby lays hold on its mother's heart with one hand and on its father's heart with the other, it becomes doubly difficult for these two to drift apart and to allow their wedded life to go upon the rocks.

2. Then the childless marriage tends toward failure because of what this failure to have children indicates. Wherever you find a home that is deliberately childless, you may know for an absolute certainty that either the husband or the wife is thoroughly selfish. Or what is worse still, it may indicate that both of them are so. And

selfishness, you know, does not make for a closer union. It makes for division. This is the case everywhere. It is selfishness that divides man from God. It is selfishness that divides nation from nation. It is selfishness that divides the husband from the wife and the wife from the husband. It is impossible to build a happy marriage on such a foundation. Selfishness must be destroyed by its opposite or there can be no true happiness. And the opposite of selfishness is love.

"Love took up the harp of life
And smote on all the chords with might,
Smote the chord of self that trembling
Passed in music out of sight."

3. Then the childless marriage tends to failure, not only because it is founded upon selfishness, but because of the fact that this selfishness often leads to positive and awful sin. You remember how Lady Macbeth scrubbed her blood-stained hand and cried, "Out, out, damned spot!" A guest had entered her home and she had assisted in his murder. But there are other hands more stained than hers. Those are the hands that have been crimsoned by the blood of a guest that was doomed to die without ever having had the privilege of living. Hence, I say, avoid the deliberately childless marriage. To fail to do so is

to endanger your happiness both here and hereafter.

III

A third cause for marital failure is neglect.

Now it is evident that, as harmless as this neglect may seem, it must inevitably end in disaster. This is true in every department of life. In order for the best business man in this city to go broke, it is not necessary that he deliberately wreck his business. All he needs to do is to let it alone. For the best farmer in this state to fail, it is not necessary that he sow his farm with weeds. All he needs to do is to neglect it.

This same law holds in the realm of religion. I do not care how highly developed as a Christian you are, all that is necessary in order for you to fail utterly is to neglect the cultivation of your spiritual life. Begin here and now to leave off the reading of the Word of God, forget the house of God, cease to work for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and, however strong you are in the faith, you will lose that faith. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" There is no escape, absolutely none.

The same also holds true of the relationship between friend and friend. All you have to do to lose the best friend you have in the world is to

neglect him. Recently I preached the commencement sermon for a certain college for young women. I was at the station when they left and watched their tearful good-byes. But the greatest cause for tears that I saw was not the fact that they would miss each other, but rather the fact that they were likely to forget each other. I feared that through the neglect of the cultivation of their friendship they would let it die so that when they met again they would meet under different skies and the old love would be dead.

And we need to remember as husbands and wives that the same law holds in the marriage relationship. How did you ever come to love each other well enough to marry? It was by a process of cultivating your friendship each for the other. You were won and you won by courtship. Your love, that began in a very small way perhaps, grew until it was strong enough for you to give yourselves each to the other.

Now if you would avoid failure you must keep up your courtship after marriage. For, mark this, your love is going to be either a growing love or it is going to be the opposite. If you have been married twenty years, you love each other far better to-day than you did when you married, or you think far less of each other. Love is like a tree. The moment it ceases to grow it

begins to die. Again it is like the flower that you have growing at home. It must have attention. If you do not watch over it, if you do not protect it from drouth in summer and from frost in winter, it withers and droops and dies. Many of us forget this. Or, remembering it, we fail to act accordingly. Thus we lose our wedding rings. Many a wife thinks because she has won her husband it is no longer necessary for her to make any serious effort to be pleasing and attractive to him. She leaves off altogether those lovable and winsome graces by which she won him. She becomes slovenly and careless in her personal appearance. And I think the man was right who said: "Many a woman has won her husband's love in her best dress to lose it in her worst."

In a town where I was teaching school some years ago a man stood one day talking to a friend. This man's wife came by. She approached her husband and asked for some money. He gave it to her and she passed on. Then his friend, not knowing who she was, turned to the husband and said with real vexation: "That is the way with these beggars. They do not hesitate to break in upon a conversation to ask for money." That woman was making a mistake. She had plenty with which to dress herself and she owed it to her

husband, if to no one else, to make herself as attractive as possible. She had no right to look like a beggar.

Then the husband is often quite as forgetful. Once lively and interesting in conversation as a lover, he is as dumb as an oyster after he becomes a husband. Once agreeable, he allows himself to develop into a grouch. Once the soul of courtesy, he becomes a boor. He is still polite down in the office. He will still spring clear across the house to pick up a handkerchief for an athletic young woman when that handkerchief is just about as heavy as a bit of moonshine. But he will allow his wife to look after the furnace, or carry a scuttle of coal upstairs and build a fire. Such conduct does not make for success. It makes only for failure.

Dr. Banks tells this story. In New England a few years ago there was an eccentric literary man who had this custom: Every Tuesday evening he would dress in his best and walk round the block and then ring his own front door bell. His wife, also dressed in her best, met him at the door and invited him into the parlor. There they would spend the evening together. Nothing was allowed to interfere with these evenings of fellowship. And the neighbors, when they looked out and saw the light in the parlor, said:

"It is honeymoon night at the terrace," and they knew that they were not to call that night. And after the husband was gone, the wife told the story to the preacher, and love's sweet rain wet her face as she spoke of it. And whether you admire their method or not, you must approve of the end attained. The winsome flower of their wedded life remained fresh and sweet, untouched by the biting frost of neglect.

IV

A fourth cause for marital failure is the triangle.

By the triangle, of course, we mean where the husband falls in love with another woman, or the wife falls in love with another man. These unfortunate and guilty affairs are often made the easier by the killing of love through the process of quarreling or neglect mentioned above. But whatever their causes, they are always without excuse.

Sometimes the woman is the guilty party. There are times when her guilt in leaving her husband to go away with another man is less scarlet than at others. But she is forever and always without any real justification. In so doing she breaks her solemn oath. In so doing she

becomes guilty of the ghastly and damning sin of adultery. In so doing she goes without fail to reap a harvest of wretchedness.

More often by far the guilty party is the man. Sometimes the woman, when she discovers that she is married to a leper, finds release in the divorce court. At other times she feels that she must live on in the filthy relationship for the sake of her children. She does not want them to know that their father is a scoundrel. She does not want her children to have to bear the stigma of his shame before the world. And thus she lives on with him though she feels the relationship to be as unclean as the nest of a vulture.

There are many homes like this. If the wife were to be guilty of an indiscretion, he would shoot her dead or disgrace her before the world. But what he does is none of her business. He has a right to do as he pleases. He has the right to trail their relationship through the mire. He has the right to make a hell of his humble little home. I have had to face situation after situation of this kind, but I always do so with a kind of dumb amazement, not unmixed with rage. I cannot understand what that type of man is made of. I leave him to his God in the confidence that of all the corruptible scoundrels that will ever creep into the dark hell, his entrance is the surest.

V

The final reason that I give for the breaking down of the marriage relationship is lack of faith in God and lack of obedience to the laws of God. This is the fountain source of all other reasons. This is the sum total of every reason that I have mentioned and of those that I have not named. Look over the list of causes that underlie the broken marriage ties to-day, and you will find, I dare say, that every single one of them could be avoided if husband and wife were to enter into this relationship in a spirit of Christ and meet its privileges and responsibilities in the power of the Holy Ghost.

For instance, if husband and wife were both vitally Christian, then that anger that strikes like lightning would be impossible because the fruit of the Spirit is love and long-suffering. Then, cruel and inhumane treatment, of which we hear so much, would be impossible, since that treatment is not given by the hands of a true Christian. Then incompatible tempers would become compatible through the transforming power of the gospel. Then the selfishness that robs the home of children would pass, for selfishness becomes unselfish when Christ is King. Then impurity would be impossible. For it ever flees like

a guilty thing afraid, before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness with the healing of his beams.

Now since all the dangers that threaten the marriage relation can be cured by an intelligent and vital Christianity conscientiously applied, I therefore earnestly call husbands and wives to repentance. Marriage is a divine institution. It needs men and women divinely transformed—men and women who have been made partakers of the Divine nature—to make it thoroughly successful. To neglect God is to court failure. No guilty love ever really succeeds. We cannot gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles. But when God is crowned in the heart of husband and wife, when their home is built around the altar, then that home becomes the anteroom of that other house eternal and in the heavens.

THE BABY

"What manner of child shall this be?" (Luke 1:66.)

I

The Fascination of the Baby

Here is a familiar group—a father, a mother, and a company of admiring friends. They are gathered around a cradle. In that cradle is a baby. And these people are looking into the wide eyes of that baby with an interest so keen that you would think that he is the only baby that had ever been born. Of course none had ever been born just like him. And yet such a scene as this has been presented countless millions of times. But in spite of this fact the baby has lost none of its fascination. It is still the most wonderful something that our human eyes have ever seen. Other things may hold our attention for a while. We may be interested in comets and shooting stars. We may be interested in towering mountains and in seas booming out their thunder upon the rocks. But none of these are to be compared in genuine interest to a real live baby.

One has called attention to Thomas Carlyle, the sage of Scotland, as he is holding a baby in his arms. It is not his own baby. He never had any children of his own. That was his misfortune. He is holding his cousin's baby. And as he holds it he looks into its face with wide-eyed wonder. He seems never to be able to get through marveling at it. "To think," he says, "that Shakespeare was once like this." His delightful interest does not surprise us. There is somehow a fascination about a baby that never grows old.

"Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the everywhere, into the here.

Where did you get those eyes so blue?
Out of the sky as I came through.

. . . . . .
What makes your cheeks like a warm white rose?
I saw something fairer than anyone knows.

Whence that three-cornered smile of bliss?
The angels gave me at once their kiss.

. . . . . .
And how did you come to us, my dear?
God thought of you and so I am here."

II

What is the Secret of This Fascination?

1. He is a creature of mystery. "What manner of child shall this be?" Ah, we do not know the answer to that question. That is one secret

of the abiding fascination of the child. It holds in its chubby hands the lure and charm of the unknown. It is a bundle of most amazing possibilities. It is a pent-up package of power. Those little hands may one day sway the rod of empire. Upon those dimpled feet he may "wade through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind." Those tender lips may one day be the wide-open gateway through which God will come to speak a living message to the hearts of men. Poetry may be pent up within him. A thousand songbirds may be hidden away in his little baby soul, waiting to burst into melodies that will charm the coming centuries. He may usher in the dawning of a new day. Or he may help to lower the moral temperature of the world. Truly he fascinates us with the mystery of his marvelous possibilities.

2. A baby is fascinating because of its helplessness. There is a charm in strength. We all recognize that. We admire strong things. We are appealed to by the rugged strength of the oak. We glory in the strength of the athlete. We love above all else that high moral strength that can brave the fighting tempests of the world. But we love weakness too. Weakness gives us a chance to do something that is Godlike. What is God always doing—morning, noon, and night? What

is he doing from eternity to eternity? He is helping the weak. He is putting his infinite strength at the disposal of those who have little strength. He is undergirding weakness with his everlasting arm. And when God gives a little child he grants us the high joy of doing something that is Christ-like. The baby fascinates us with its clinging, adorable weakness.

3. Then the baby fascinates us because of its marvelous power. What a mighty something is a baby! Its might is not the might of physical strength. It is the might of love. You can't help loving a baby. And because it is so pure and innocent you cannot but be blessed by that love. I do not believe that any man ever loved a little child who was not made better by that love. The prophet said, "A little child shall lead them"; and from generation to generation little children have been leading men out of darkness into light, out of selfishness into unselfishness, out of estrangement and hate into fellowship and love.

What a revolution a little child can work in a human life! It is good to see Little Nell in the "Old Curiosity Shop" become like an angel of light to the hard and unclean man that loves her. It is fine to watch Eppie push the selfishness and hate out of the heart of the miserly weaver of Ravelo and fill it full of sympathy and love and

tenderness. It is fine to see how Cosette redeems her mother from a life of impurity to one of tender self-forgetfulness and sacrifice.

Then there is the charming story in the "Road Mender." An old organ grinder is one day grinding out his uncouth music in an uncouth street. A little child turns its soiled face up to the hardened face of the old grinder to be kissed. But he is bitter and full of hate. Instead of kissing the child, he strikes her and she runs away weeping. Later he is hurt in an accident and is sent to the hospital. Here he remembers the upturned face of the child and is haunted by it. When he is well again he sets out to find her. He secures the records that children like best. He goes into all the unclean and filthy streets. He never finds her. But as he searches he finds other children and he finds a new tenderness, a new sympathy, a new heart, a new Saviour.

I recall an experience in my own ministry in the city of Forth Worth, Texas. There was a man of my acquaintance that I very much desired to win to Christ. I made more than one effort to have a heart-to-heart talk with him, but always with little success. He was that type of man who is very much afraid of preachers. When I went into his store he had a way of getting frantically busy. He looked as if he were going to wrap up

everything in the house. I think if he had had an auto in there he would have made an effort to put a piece of paper round it. Of course I would not interfere with his work while he was so busy. Therefore at every visit I would have to leave without having accomplished my purpose.

But one day I spoke to one of his clerks. I was sure that this clerk knew the man intimately and well. I said to him: "How about our friend? Do you know anything special about him? Has he a hobby? Or has he someone that he peculiarly loves?" And the man thought a moment and then answered: "He has a little girl in his home that he fairly worships." With that important bit of knowledge for my reward I went away.

Some days after that I saw this merchant in my audience. And standing there in my pulpit I talked to him, heart to heart and face to face, very largely as if he and I were alone. I talked to him about his little girl. I pleaded with him to give her the best possible chance at life. I urged upon him the importance of throwing round her those Christian influences that make for the best moral support. Then I spoke of the selfishness and the wickedness of allowing her to tangle her innocent feet in his old ragged and selfish and indifferent life and fall out into sin in this

world and into ruin in the world to come. The man listened intently. And not only did he listen, but he fought his fight and won his victory. And when I stepped into that store a few days later I found him in earnest conversation with one of his clerks. And turning to me he said: "Here is a man who has two little girls in his home and he is not a Christian. I am trying to win him and want you to help me."

How did this man come to the Cross? He was led there, as so many millions of others have been led, by the mighty and tender hand of a little child. O what a thing of blessed power is a baby! Some of you realize perfectly the truth of what I am saying. You have understood God better since your baby came. And Heaven has ceased to be a far-off and unreal place since the little fellow you love slipped away into the miracle country carrying your heart with him.

III

The Importance of the Baby

"What manner of child shall this be?" This is by far the most important question of this day. It is by far the most important question of any day. I know that a great part of the world does

not believe this. I know that a great part of the world has never believed it. That, in large measure, is the secret of the tragic plight of this sin-torn and hate-torn day in which we live. We are paying the penalty in the State and in the Church for our neglect of childhood. The baby question is now and must forever remain the most important of all questions.

Of course you may think otherwise. You may think that the most important question is what Congress is going to do, or what is to be the outcome of the dispute between labor and capital. You may think that the question of supreme importance is how to cure the wave of lawlessness that is sweeping over our land. You may think that our supreme questions concern the doings of armies and navies. But that is where you are mistaken. When you read the newspaper this morning you turned to the first page to find the most important happenings of the day. But you should have turned, as another has said, to that obscure column over toward the back that is headed "Births." Of all the pages of the newspaper, that is ever the most important.

But it seems that we can never be made to believe this. Had you been in a province of the Roman Empire some twenty centuries ago you would have found much to depress you. Some

wise men would have said in despair: "Rome's eagles have spread their ugly wings over the wide world and the beaks of Rome's eagles are sucking the heart blood of the world. The night is upon us and there is no prospect of dawn." Then suppose you had said: "The outlook is not so despairful as that. The skies are already being tinted with the rosy finger of the dawn. In fact, the 'Dayspring from on high' has already visited us. Over in a stable in the obscure village of Bethlehem a little baby was born last night."

Do you suppose anyone would have believed you? They would have laughed outright and said: "A baby! What is a baby in comparison with Rome? What can a baby's weak hands accomplish in the face of the opposition of the most compactly organized government the world has ever seen?" But in spite of all appearances, that little baby was far mightier than Rome. And since then He has "lifted empires off their hinges and changed the whole course of human history."

You will notice this: that when God wants to move forward he always does so on the feet of little children. When the night had settled grim and dark upon the face of the world, when the Catholic Church had taken our Lord away and had given us a dead ritualism in his stead, God determined to bring back the light. And how did

he go about it? He did not send to the world an army of soldiers or of scholars or of philosophers. He stooped down and put a little baby in the arms of an obscure mother in a miner's cottage. And they christened that baby Martin Luther. And thus the darkness fled, and there was the dawning of a glad new day.

When religion in England was cold and dead, when the educated were regarding Christianity as an exploded and defeated thing, God determined upon a revival. How did he bring this revival about? He put a baby into the arms of Susanna Wesley. That was all. And that was enough. And it came to pass that that baby rode through the century, and as he rode the icicles dropped from the eaves of the houses and the winter-stripped trees put on their verdant foliage, and the birds sang and the flowers bloomed and the human heart stood up in the glad consciousness that God had come.

At this very moment there is an army of invasion marching upon this country of ours. And however we may fortify ourselves, that army is going to conquer. It is going to capture and take possession of absolutely everything that we have. It is going to take possession of every State in the Union. It is going to take possession of every city, of every town, of every hamlet. It is going

to take possession of every political office. It is going to take possession of every business. It is going to take possession of every school and college and university. It is going to take possession of every church and every home. Nothing is going to be left to us, absolutely nothing.

Who compose this army of invasion? Answer: The children that are in our homes. They are the future conquerors and the future rulers of the world. What they are will determine what the civilization of to-morrow is to be. If there is a larger and better day ahead, it is because we have made these children larger and better men and women than ourselves. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that our Lord said: "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones." To despise is to undervalue. Take heed that you do not set a cheap valuation upon the child, for he holds in his baby hands the great to-morrow.

IV

Factors Determining the Future of the Baby

"What manner of child shall this be?" Is there any way of giving an intelligent answer to this question? Is there any method of determining what is to be the character of the child that

is now in our homes? In other words, do we live in a world of mere chance or in a world of law? Is the statement of Paul true where he says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"? We believe that that word is absolutely true. We believe that what a man sows in his field he will reap. We believe also that whatsoever a man sows in the heart of his child, that, too, he will reap.

"What manner of child shall this be?"

1. That depends in some measure upon the ancestry of the child. Every child has a right to be well born. Some children are "half damned in their birth." There are children who come into the world with poisoned blood in their veins. No man has a right "to sit at the upstairs window of life and pour fiery acid down upon the innocent and unprotected heads of his children." No man has a right to do that which surely tends toward the despoiling of his children that are yet unborn.

2. Environment has something to do with the answer to this question. It is far harder to grow flowers amidst the unsunned gloom of a back alley than in an unshaded garden in the open country. It is far harder to rear children of sound bodies and clean minds amidst the evils of a slum than in a more wholesome, healthful environment.

3. But while heredity and environment are of some importance in the answering of this question, by far the most important factor is training. Without the proper training the best ancestry and the most wholesome environment may go for nothing. By proper training both a bad ancestry and a bad environment may be overcome. Therefore, we are safe in saying that the words of the wise man have lost none of their wisdom with the passing of the years. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Now, I wonder if you believe this. It is evident that the Catholics believe it. How is it that their church is waxing stronger and stronger? It is not doing so by the conquests that it makes from without. The Catholics are not half so expert in evangelistic campaigns as we are. They win by this method: When a Catholic man marries a Catholic woman their home becomes a Catholic home. Their children are reared in the Catholic faith.

The Jews believe there is a definite answer to this question. They have been despised and persecuted for long centuries, and yet a Jew is a Jew still around the world. How has this come about? It has not come about by mere chance. It has come about through training. When a Jew mar-

ries a Jewess their home is a Jewish home and their children are reared in the Jewish faith.

Germany believed there was an answer to this question. They believed it was possible for us to determine what manner of child this should be. A few years ago they asked the question as they looked into the face of babyhood. And they said: "This child shall be a soldier." And a soldier the child became. Thus it was that a peace-loving nation was transformed in two generations into one of the greatest warring nations that the world has ever seen.

"What manner of child shall this be?" Is Protestant Christianity to leave the answer to this question to mere chance? Are we willing to hazard the salvation of those we love, are we willing to hazard civilization itself, by a lazy and hazy and indifferent attitude toward this matter of supreme importance? We dare not do so. We must face the fact that the most important work we have on our hands to-day is the training of our children. Then we must work at our task heartened and made earnest by the following considerations:

(1) A child can become a Christian. He can do so for the simple reason that those characteristics that are essential to entering into the kingdom belong to the child by nature. Take faith,

for instance. This is the supreme essential both for finding and pleasing God. Now faith is natural to a child. In fact, he will believe anything you tell him till by deceiving him you teach him to believe otherwise. Were you to tell your child that you climbed up last night and bit a piece out of the face of the moon, he would not ask, "How did you get up there?" He would rather ask, "How did it taste?" It is not surprising, therefore, to hear Jesus saying: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no case enter therein."

(2) Not only can a child become a Christian, but he can remain a Christian easier than anybody else. What are some of the difficulties of the adult convert? At times he finds it hard to break away from an evil companionship. At other times he finds it hard to break away from the slavery of evil habits. If he is hindered by none of these, he finds it quite as hard to break away from the habit of Christless and unspiritual thinking.

(3) Not only can a child become a Christian and remain a Christian easier than anybody else, but he makes the best Christian. This statement is perfectly reasonable. Who make the best baseball players? Not those who begin playing at forty. They are those who begin playing in

boyhood. Who make the best violinists? Not those who take up the study of music when they are fifty. They are those who begin that study in childhood. Who make the most skilled and effective workers in the Church of Jesus Christ? Those who begin that work in their young and tender years.

(4) Not only is it true that a child can become a Christian and remain a Christian easier than anybody else, not only is it true that those coming as children make the most effective Christians; but it is further true that unless they are brought to Christ in childhood, the chances are that they will never become Christians at all. "Can a man be born again when he is old?" He can by the grace of God. But it is a rare miracle, indeed. If our children are not reached for God in their childhood, the chances are that they will never be reached.

(5) We depend almost wholly upon two agencies for the performing of this high task of child training. One is the Church and the other is the home. The Church is of vast importance, but its opportunity is very limited. It is all but powerless without the home. Therefore, if our children are to be won for Christ, we must not only have wise and Christian training at the hands of pastors and Sunday school teachers, but also at the

hands of fathers and mothers. "What manner of child shall this be?" The answer to that question depends mainly upon the kind of training he receives at home. Therefore, by far the most urgent call of this hour is for fathers and mothers who will measure up to their responsibilities to God and to their children by making their homes vitally Christian.

THE MOTHER

"Her children rise up and call her blessed." (Prov. 31:28.)

This text is not complete in itself. It is a part of a picture. It is a bit of a portrait that was painted by an artist many years ago. He did not label the picture. Had he done so, we do not know exactly what he would have called it. But my opinion is that he would have named it "The Ideal Woman."

I

The first fact we notice about this ideal woman is that she was a mother. When this artist painted a face that should embody in it all that is most winsome and worthful in womanhood, he made that face the face of a mother. He makes no mention of how beautiful she was. He has nothing to say of the grace of her form or figure. He does not tell us that she led in any crusade. He does not mention her prominence in society. But he does say she was a mother.

Now many changes have come since this old portrait was painted. The artist would be quite

bewildered if he were to step into the busy and rushing age in which we live. Our inventions would startle him. Our schools and churches might amaze him. But his greatest astonishment would come from the changed position of woman. He would find that, whereas in his day about the only honorable vocation open to woman was that of wifehood and motherhood, to-day almost every vocation is open to her. He would find her toiling at almost every task that is engaging man. Not only would he find her working at these tasks, but he would find her succeeding at them.

But in spite of these changes, I am of the opinion that he would have no disposition to alter the portrait of the ideal woman that he drew so many years ago. By this I do not mean that there are not many useful and worthful women that are finding their vocations outside the home. The business woman of to-day is making a worthwhile contribution to our modern life. Those in our schools and hospitals and welfare work are giving a wonderfully good account of themselves. We thank God for many of these. They are indeed the salt of the earth. But having said this, we still believe that this wise man of the long ago was right in giving first place to the mother. Woman can render large service in many fields. She can render her highest and holi-

est and best in the field of motherhood. She and she alone has power really to rule the world. All the rest of us arrive upon the scene too late. When she holds the race to her breast and rocks it to sleep in her arms, she puts her fingerprints upon it for time and for eternity.

II

But this woman is not ideal simply because she is a mother. There are many mothers who are altogether unworthy. The secret of the high place this woman holds in the mind of this artist is not simply the fact that she was a mother, but that she was a successful mother. Not only did she work at the highest of all tasks, but she made good at that task. That is the reason he crowned her with the richest of crowns. She was such a mother as made it possible for her children to rise up and call her blessed.

Now not every mother is so successful. Many do not enrich the lives of their children; they impoverish them. They do not bless; they curse. One of the most dangerous highwaymen that the South ever produced declared as an old man that his career in crime was due to the influence of his mother. His father was honest, but his mother was not. The first theft he ever committed, his

mother punished him not because of the theft, but because he bungled the job and got caught. Ever after that, he declared, it was his motto to leave his tracks cold. And his tracks were left cold at a price that none of us fully know.

But this mother succeeded. She not only chose the highest vocation, but she so gave herself to it as to win its richest prize. In so doing she made the highest possible contribution. In my opinion Mrs. Susanna Wesley could have shone almost anywhere, but I am absolutely certain that she rendered her largest possible service by being a successful mother. It was in working victoriously at this high task that she put her woman's hands upon all the continents and pushed them into new zones of light.

III

What was the secret of this mother's success? It was no accident. We recognize at once as we study this portrait why her children rose up and called her blessed. When we see the type of woman she was, we are not at all surprised that she succeeded at her high task.

1. She was a pious mother. She was a woman who feared the Lord. This is a fundamental requirement. I do not see how any woman can hope

to succeed in the delicate and trying task of child-rearing without the help of God. It seems to me that if there was not another reason that a mother could give herself for becoming a Christian, the responsibilities of motherhood would be sufficiently compelling to bring any mother in the world to a personal surrender to her Lord.

The reason for this is obvious. It is Jesus that discovers to us the value of childhood. He alone gives the little child a sure moral support. The only safety for our children, as for ourselves, is in Him. Therefore, every real mother ought to make it her supreme business to know Jesus Christ if for no other reason than that she may introduce him to her boys and girls and put them in his care.

"Her children rise up and call her blessed." Why? Not because she was beautiful. Not because she was good at high five and bridge whist. Not because she was a graceful dancer. Not because she was a busy club woman. They blessed her because "her eyes were homes of silent prayer." They blessed her because she was a woman that honored God. They blessed her because she put her hands upon them in a wooing and winsome way for Christ's sake. For, believe me, mothers, there is absolutely nothing that will mean so much for the saving of your children

and for the winning of their lasting love, as your genuine devotion to God.

2. This mother was a strong woman. Her strength was not physical, but moral and spiritual. She was strong in her loyalty to God. And woman seems gifted with a strength in this respect superior to that of man. It is rare indeed to see a husband and father remain true to God and rear his children for God when his wife is thoughtless and worldly. Some years ago I had a steward in my church who was a most excellent man. He was active and earnest and loyal. But he married a society woman. She did not definitely oppose his religious activities. She herself was a member of the Church. But by simply failing to be interested she thus put out the fire of his enthusiasm. Little by little he left off his church work. Little by little he ceased to attend. His family to-day is living very largely as if they were utterly pagan. The husband and father was a good man, but he was not strong enough to stand the test put upon him by an unchristian wife.

On the other hand, we have known woman after woman who, though married to a Godless heathen, went on her sainted course year in and year out to the end of the journey. Not only so, but we have known such to rear a large family of chil-

dren and win every one of them to Christ and the Church. And this she did, not only without the help of her husband, but often with his positive opposition. To achieve a victory of this kind requires strength. It requires the very highest and finest type of strength. Such was the strength of this woman of our text.

3. Not only was she strong, but she was as tender as she was strong. She was a woman of a loving heart and of a gentle hand. "She reacheth forth her hands to the needy," says the artist. What a power for tender mercy are the hands of a good mother! When I read the passage I think of my mother's hands. How caressing and skillful they were in dealing with her own children! But they were also stretched forth to the poor and needy. I remember seeing her prepare dishes for some sick body. So lovely were these dishes that I felt that I would be perfectly willing to be sick myself to get to enjoy her tender ministry.

But not only was this woman kind in deed; she was kind also in word. Listen to this rare touch. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." She was kind in her speech. She did not hide a two-edged sword behind her mother lips. She was not always stabbing and knifing and criticizing. "In her tongue was the law of kindness."

How glad I am that this description fits my mother as well as it did the mother whom the artist painted so long ago. I would hate to have to think of her as a bit of termagant. I think I was a grown man teaching school before I ever found out that all women were not gentle and kind. I went to see a mother one day to talk over with her an indiscretion on the part of her daughter who was in school to me. And such a tempest broke upon me as to leave me utterly bewildered and speechless. I do not know exactly what law governed the tongue of that woman, but it certainly was not the law of kindness.

4. This woman was a home maker. That was the big purpose of her life. To that important task she gave her thought and her energy day after day and year after year. The writer emphasizes again and again her industry. She was a worker. She actually toiled at her task—toiled at it sacrificially, toiled no doubt many a time when her work seemed to attract very little attention and when there was absolutely no applause. But she went on her way mothering her children and making for them a home.

Now many labor-saving devices have been invented since that far-off day, but nothing has been invented to make motherhood altogether easy. For a child to be born, a mother still has

to go down into the valley of the shadow of death. For a child to be rightly mothered, she has still to give years to the task. There are plenty of women to-day who are able to hire everything done for their children, but I do not think any mother is rich enough to afford to shirk her personal responsibility. The woman whose children rise up and call her blessed is one who is willing to give herself to the mothering of her own children. To refuse to do this is to court failure utter and complete.

Dr. Chapman tells of a wealthy woman who hired a nurse of whom she knew little except that she was capable. A few years passed and her children were found to be afflicted with some strange malady. She carried them to a competent physician. The children were found to be suffering from leprosy. It was found further that they had contracted the disease from their nurse, who was a woman from the South Sea Islands. This is an extreme case, I know. But many children to-day are contracting diseases worse than leprosy. They are becoming infected with the leprosy of the soul because their own mothers have not time to give themselves to the task of mothering them.

Not only was this woman willing to work, but she was a careful mother. The writer says: "She

looketh well to the ways of her household." There is not an hour in the day, or the night either, that she does not know where her children are. She does not sing, "Where is my wandering boy tonight?" She kept such close watch on him in his childhood that in later life he did not wander. There are exceptions to the rule, but most wandering boys begin the process very early. They were lost in their maturer years because somebody was careless in the days of boyhood. There are not a few mothers to-day who know practically nothing about their children. They have not time. They have to go to the club or to the movies or somewhere else, and the children are left to the unwholesome nurture of the street.

Then this industrious and watchful woman faces the future without fear. "She is not afraid of the cold," the writer tells us. In the springtime she has prepared for the winter. She knows the days will come when many influences will touch her child. Therefore, while she has him all her own she gets ready for the temptations that are ahead. And having prepared and having trained her child for God and committed him to God, she abides the issue without fear, knowing that, having trained her child in the way that he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it.

What a wise woman she was! How we need more of her kind to-day. A preacher told me some time ago that he was taking dinner one night with one of his parishioners. They had no sooner seated themselves at the table than a shrill whistle was heard without in the dark. The boy of the family, a young fellow of about seventeen, pushed his chair back from the table without eating a bite and, in spite of the protests of the father and mother, went out into the night. The mother put her face in her hands, wept, and said: "They have got my boy. They have got my boy."

Mother, there is coming a time, if you miss your chance, when it will seem to you that everybody has more influence over your boy and over your girl than you have. The time for you to prepare for the winter of temptation is in the springtime of the life of your child. God shuts him up with you for almost a dozen beautiful years to give you your chance. If you throw it away, then it is likely to mean heartache both for you and for the one you love. But if you use this opportunity wisely and in the fear of God, then you need not be afraid of the future. You may even fall into your last sleep in the consciousness that you have won the fight, and even after you have gone to heaven your children will "rise up and call you blessed."

THE FATHER

"Master, I have brought unto thee my son." (Mark 9:17.)

I

These fine words were not uttered, as you might suppose, by a consecrated mother. They were uttered by a father. That is a bit surprising. We hardly expected such a happy deliverance from this source. For the father has somehow come upon evil days. He has in a measure lost his position in the family. Sad to say, this is at times the fault of no one but himself. But such is not always the case.

A few years ago I undertook to celebrate Father's Day. The Sunday before had been Mother's Day. The services in honor of mother were tender and tearful. An enthusiastic audience was present, wearing red carnations for the living and white carnations for the dead. There were songs fragrant with the breath of devotion for the mothers who were present, and sweet with memories of those who were gone. But Father's Day did not turn out so well. There seemed a

lack of enthusiasm. Then, too, there were no songs that we could find that peculiarly fitted the occasion. In fact, after considerable search I could find only two of any kind. One of them was "Everybody Works But Father." The other ran something like this:

> "Dad, Dad, Dad, the dear old worthless geezer,
> The fusses I have had with that old patience teaser!
> He lacks the spirit of a mouse,
> Most anyone can down him,
> We let him hang around the house,
> 'Tis cheaper than to drown him."

Now, be it understood that I am not objecting to the honor given to mother. We cannot honor her too much. But I do think it unfortunate that we are so short in our honor to father. Of course we can see that many fathers are unworthy, but this may be said about some mothers. There are also many fathers that are worthy. Such was this father whose words we use for our text.

II

"Master, I have brought unto thee my son." What do these words tell us about this father?

They do not tell us whether he was rich or poor. They do not indicate whether he had made a success of his business or a failure. They give no clue as to whether he was a man of the schools

or unlearned and ignorant. They do not tell us what his business was or where he lived or whether he was prominent or obscure. They do not even record his name. He is one of those humble fathers who do their work, but fail to leave their autographs. But, while these words record none of the above facts, they do answer for us other questions that are of far more importance.

1. They tell us that he was a man of faith. He was a man who believed in Jesus Christ. Matthew tells us that he came and kneeled before Jesus. That is, the only time we meet him, we find him on his knees. He is engaged in the biggest and brawniest task that ever engaged a human soul. He is at prayer. And the prayer that he is offering is not in behalf of himself. It is in behalf of his unfortunate and afflicted son.

How this man came by his faith in Jesus we are not explicitly told. This story seems to indicate, however, that it was his desire to help his boy that led him to Christ. Possibly he had cared little for religion before his son was born. But one day he held his little laddie in his arms. As the child grew the powers of evil got a strange hold upon him. From being a joy he became a source of heartache. The father felt that something beyond the power of human strength must be done for the boy. Therefore, he turned to

Christ because he believed that in no other way could he meet the deepest needs of his afflicted son.

It is safe to say that many a father has been led to Christ in the same way. The responsibilities of fatherhood ought to be enough to bring every Christless father to the foot of the Cross. If the appeal of Jesus on your own account does not seem sufficiently compelling, then the fact that there is in your home a little child who is looking to you for guidance ought to be enough to bring every true father to a personal surrender. Your child is safe only as he is made safe by Jesus Christ. And if he is saved by him, he needs the help of a father who himself knows the Lord.

It is a great privilege to have a Christian father. It is a great privilege to be such a father. There is no service that you can render your child that will make him think of you with greater gratitude and tenderness when you are gone. There are many fine things I could say about my own father, but the very finest is this: that the memory of the oldest of us does not go back beyond the family altar. Every day he was saying to Christ what this father said: "Master, I have brought to thee the children that thou hast given me." And for that reason he led every child that he had to the

Father that sustained him in life and was his staff in death.

2. These words also indicate that this father was a lover. Now, I am aware of the fact that the mother usually gets the credit for doing about all the loving that is done in the family. And I am ready to agree that she deserves all the credit that she gets. Her love is about the finest and most Christlike something that the world can know. But let us remember that she is not the only lover. The father loves too. This is true in spite of the fact that he is not so gentle and tender in touch and expression as the mother. It is true in spite of the fact that he sometimes seems exceedingly lacking in understanding and in sympathy.

Since he loves, he rejoices over the well-being of his child. He also suffers in his failures and defeats. You can wound him and wound him deeply. You can also set his heart to singing. Therefore, we do him wrong when we think of him as little more than a meal ticket. We do him great injustice when we view him as no more than a rather troublesome check book. As we look at this father, his voice is choked with sobs and his cheeks are wet with tears. They are sobs and tears that are born of the pain and anguish of love.

Since the father is a lover, he is willing and glad to sacrifice for those that he loves. I knew a mother once who could make an ordinary gingham dress last a long time that she might have a little more to invest in the education of her children. But I knew a father who was no less willing than she. He could make a pair of Sunday shoes last him for years. And when he went home to heaven he left a very small wardrobe, and the hands that were folded across his bosom were calloused hands. They had become so not from toiling for himself, but from toiling for his children.

I knew a mother whose voice was caressing and whose touch was as tender as the petal of a rose. But I knew a father, too, who could also be tender and caressing at times. Had you seen him on certain occasions, I confess you would have regarded him as a bit stern, if not positively austere. But at other times he was far different. I shall never forget the night when it was thought that I should not live until morning. The one who came to tell me that I was likely to slip away before sunrise was not Mother, but Father. And no mother was ever more tender. And, small lad that I was, I could see that he was as strong as he was tender. I could see that for love's sake he was going to do the very best that he could to take me in

his sturdy arms to the very brink of the Jordan and pass me over into the Arms Everlasting.

Somewhere I read this story: A white-haired man was dying in a hospital in Denver, Colo. The doctor examined him carefully and then said: "My friend, you are dying, but so far as I can find you have no organic trouble. Have you had some great sorrow?" And the patient smiled wearily and said: "I have. Now that the end is at hand I will tell you. Twenty years ago my son committed a crime. To protect him I took it upon myself. For a score of years I have been a fugitive from justice. During that time I have not seen a single one of those that I love the best. I have saved my boy, but it has broken my heart." He was a lover, just as the father of our text and just as is many another father who goes about his commonplace tasks upon our streets to-day.

3. This father was a man of fine good sense. When he realized that his boy was in great need of help, he did not send him out in search of Jesus by himself. He did not try to drive him to the Church or to the Sunday school while he himself remained at home. Neither did he undertake to send him by his wife or by some friend. Hear the fine account that he gave of himself: "Master, I have brought unto thee my son."

Now this is where so many fathers fail. We

delegate our responsibility to someone else. We put it on the mother or on the pastor or on the Sunday school teacher, or on some friend, or we leave it to mere chance. In so doing we make for the wrecking of many a promising boy and girl. In so doing we often bring upon ourselves the sorest of all wounds and the bitterest of all heartaches.

That was David's mistake. He had officers at the head of his army that he was sure he could trust. So he put Absalom in their care. He said to them earnestly and urgently: "Deal gently with the young man." But yonder comes a runner. He brings news. To the royal father it is most bitter news. Do you hear that tragic outcry that is freighted with the agony of unspeakable grief? "O my son Absalom, my son! my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" This broken father is remembering the fatal blunder he has made in having intrusted the safety of his son to the care of someone other than himself.

Yet we go on committing this same blunder from generation to generation. The pressure upon us is more heavy for doing this to-day, possibly, than ever before. The opportunities are also greater. It is so easy to put our responsibilities in the hands of another. Society is highly organized.

The day schools have our children through most of the day. We can turn them over to the servants or to the movies at night. We can give them into the hands of the street, or to the Sunday school for a part of Sunday. And this many of us do. I doubt if there has ever been another day in our history when so many fathers were shirking their responsibilities.

Now the reason for this is not that we who are fathers are altogether indifferent. We must confess, however, that there are some who seem so. At one of our State fairs not long ago there was a hog of unusual development. He took the blue ribbon. The keeper of that hog was a small boy. He stood by smoking one cigarette after another, and giving utterance to language that was altogether unbecoming. As a boy, he was about the poorest specimen at the fair. And, strange to say, the same man who raised the hog was letting the boy grow up. He was interested in hogs, this father. He read books about them. But he seemed to have no interest in either the physical, or mental, or spiritual development of his son.

Then there are those who neglect their responsibility because they are too busy. I was talking to a man some years ago who was an active and earnest worker in the Church. But he was a

very busy man. He was making money. And he said to me as if it were something of which to be proud: "You know I am hardly acquainted with my own children. I get up in the morning and leave for my work before they are awake; I come home at night after they are asleep." He was making a fine living. He was clothing his children and feeding them, but he was making a mighty poor effort to give them the bread of life. He was so busy about the secondary that he could not give due attention to the primary.

Then there are so many who are unwilling to pay the price. We are eager that our children be saved. We yearn for them to be good men and good women. But we are not willing to give ourselves with self-forgetful earnestness to the task of making them so. It is too much trouble for us to train them. It is too much trouble to have family prayers. It is too much trouble to give them any of our companionship. It is too much trouble to set a right example. It is easier to turn the task over to the day school and the Sunday school and the preacher.

I was holding a meeting in the West some years ago. At the close of one of the services a splendid physician came to the front with his wife and shook my hand and said: "I want you to pray for my two boys." I answered that I would. And

this father and mother turned to go away. But there was a fine old saint standing by who was too wise to let the matter rest just here. Therefore, he dared to ask the father this question: "Doctor, did you ever put yourself on the altar for those two boys?" The doctor hesitated and then answered: "I do not know exactly what you mean." "I mean this: if those two boys were mine, I would tell God that I would not eat nor sleep till he saved them. And if you will thus put yourself on the altar for them, I will do the same." The doctor looked a bit startled at first. I was genuinely so. But he loved his sons. And now that his own responsibility had been brought home to him, he was too courageous to dodge it. "I will do it," he replied. And we went home.

As I thought over the proceedings, I confess that I was perplexed. I thought both of them had been rather rash. But the outcome proved the contrary. In far less than twenty-four hours both of those young men showed every evidence of having been genuinely and truly converted. And it is my candid conviction that they would never have been converted had this doctor not dared to face up to his own responsibility. He was willing to pay the price and he won the victory.

Not only did this father show his good sense in bringing his child himself, but he showed it

further in that he brought him while he was yet a child. He did not wait till the boy had grown up and gone out beyond the reach of his hand and beyond the call of his voice. He won him to Christ while he was yet in his home. And that is the time when we must win our boys. That is certainly the time of our greatest opportunity. They honor us then as they will possibly never honor us again. We exercise a power of leadership over them that, if not utilized, we can never exercise again. Therefore, happy is the father that can say to his Lord: "Every child in my home I have brought unto thee." And happy is the son that has such a father.

III

What was the outcome of this man's effort?

1. He saved his son. The boy whose life would have otherwise gone to ruin was brought under the transforming and healing power of Christ. I imagine I meet him when he is grown to manhood. He is strong and clean and God-fearing. And when I ask him for the secret, his lips tremble and his eyes fill with tears, and he says: "When I was young, a strange affliction laid hold on me, and in some way I was brought peculiarly under the power of evil. Physicians could do nothing for

me. Nobody could help. But my father loved me too well to give me up. And one day he took me by the hand and led me to Jesus."

2. Through this experience the father himself came to a better understanding of Jesus Christ. It is altogether possible that it was this experience that brought to him the salvation of his own soul, as well as that of his boy. Whether this was the case or not, had you sat down in after years and talked to this father about this costly and self-sacrificing visit to Jesus, he would not have lamented the fact that he lost so many days from his business in making this adventure. He would have counted it as the most profitable investment in his life, both for himself and for his son.

Somebody tells this story: A father drove a team of spirited horses into a certain village one day. He dropped the lines for an instant and started to step into a store, but the horses took fright and dashed madly down the street. The man turned, and with almost superhuman effort he seized the lead horse by the bridle. But he was beaten by the tongue of the wagon and pounded by the hoofs of the horses. But he clung on till at last he brought them to a stop. By that time he was bleeding at the mouth and ears, and when friends came to help him they saw that he was dying. "Why did you do it?" said one friend,

who knew him best and loved him best, as he held the dying man's head in his lap. "Go look in the wagon," was the answer. And when they looked in the wagon, there lay a little lad asleep on a bit of straw. And no man said that the price was too great.

"Master, I have brought unto thee my son." If no price is too great to pay for the privilege of saying that in the here and now, certainly none is too great to be able to say it in the life to come. Surely the joys of heaven will be infinitely enriched if we shall be able to say, when we see him face to face, "Master, I have brought unto thee my son." May that be the winsome privilege of every father here, is my earnest prayer.

THE MARRIAGEABLE DAUGHTER

"Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14.)

We are not concerned to-day with the winsome heroine to whom these words were first spoken. We rather take them as addressed to ourselves. They contain a message for those who are older grown. They hold a challenge for us who are in the stern stress of life's middle passage. They contain a battle cry for the youth of to-day, and particularly for the young women. Therefore, to every young woman I would like to address this stirring and arresting question: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

I

The youth of to-day are being very sharply criticized. They are also being very ardently defended. There are those who say that of all the generations that have yet come upon this planet, the present is the worst. Never was there another such cantankerous crowd as that that is composed of the young men and young women

of this day of grace. In the opinion of these critics they excel all others in point of irreverence, in point of lawlessness, in point of their contempt for the fundamental integrities that hold our civilization together.

While both our young men and our young women are the objects of this ridicule, the heavier and sharper part of it is borne by the young women. A large part of them is classed as "flappers." About this flapper nothing too hard or harsh can be said. She is described by one of her own sex as "a chaste little hell-cat with a muddy mind." That is, though she does not, as a rule, go to the limit of sin, she flirts with it, understands it, buzzes about it as a candle fly buzzes about a candle. She just manages not to fall into the furnace of shame. This is the case, not because she is better than her sister who does fall, but because she is more wise to the ways of the world and more able to take care of herself.

Then there are a few who resolutely defend this present generation. They declare that they are the same that their fathers have been. They tell us frankly that the sins of which our present-day youth is guilty, we also were guilty; that the follies that they practice, we also practiced in our time. They even dare to inform us that the criticisms that we hurl against the youth of this gen-

eration are the same in kind as those that the older have given to the younger all through human history. In proof of their contention they quote us an old tablet recently dug up in the Orient. This tablet is at least four or five thousand years old. Yet the writer of that tablet makes this very modern statement: "The world is soon coming to an end. This is proven by the fact that children are disobedient to parents, and everybody wants to write a book."

Now in my opinion there is a measure of truth in both of these positions and also a measure of error. Naturally we are the same that our fathers have been. The heart of humanity is the same through the years, ever pulsating to the same great needs and the same great loves and longings. But while we are the same in some respects, in others we are different. This difference is not an inherited difference. It is rather brought about by a different training. Our modern youth has grown up under different circumstances from those that surrounded us. It is quite natural, therefore, that they are in some measure different.

II

What are some of the agencies that have tended to make our modern youth different from the youth of preceding generations?

1. We have had different amusements. These amusements have been greater in quantity and more exciting in quality than those of any other generation that our nation has yet seen.

(1) There is the moving picture show. I still regard myself as among the young. Yet when I was a lad there was not a moving picture theater in the world. To-day we have many thousands of them. They occupy strategic positions in all our cities, and the town is rather small and backward that does not possess at least one place where moving pictures are shown. To these show houses our people, old and young, are going in great numbers. It is estimated that from fifteen to twenty millions attend these every day. That is about twice the number that attend all our schools and colleges and universities. Many of these are of course adults, but the majority are young people.

Now it is not my purpose to make a wholesale condemnation of the moving picture show. There are some pictures that are wholesome and clean. There are some that even have fine educational values. But it is exceedingly unfortunate that this business that might be used in such a way as to make a real contribution both to our intellectual and moral life has, as a rule, got into the hands of men who put gold above God, and

who are determined to make money even at the risk of debauching the youth of the land. It is not the moving picture that hurts. It is the wrong kind of picture.

Now there are many such pictures being shown in all our cities. Some of them are flings at Protestantism. If a preacher is pictured, he is usually made ridiculous—a thing that never happens in the case of a Jewish rabbi or of a Catholic priest. When they appear, they are always of heroic mold. We have pictures that glorify lawlessness. But most hurtful of all is the salacious sex story. Here evil is transfigured by being made to appear at once natural, common, and desirable. Their very names are suggestive of the vile and the filthy: "Sinners in Paradise," "Exchanging Husbands," "The Cave of Fallen Angels." These are a few of the menus with which we are regaling our youth. And the wonder is, not that a few of them are debauched, but that many are strong enough to come through such a fiery furnace without the smell of fire upon their garments. For the youth of to-day know more of the shady side of life than our fathers and mothers ever learned.

(2) Then there is the modern dance. It is a fact which every man and woman who is alert must know that we are dancing far worse to-day than in any previous generation. Not that the modern

dance is altogether new. It is, as the editor of one of our great New York dailies pointed out, "a reversion to the lowest practices of savage people." The only difference, he declares, is that while they are childishly frank in declaring the purpose of such dancing, we are more reticent. But whether practiced among savages or in brothels and dens of vice or in an atmosphere of refinement, its appeal remains unchanged. In all circumstances and in all situations it tends to awaken that which is worst in those who participate.

That the tendency of the modern dance is to immorality and indecency is proven first of all by the fact that these dances were born among us, not in an atmosphere of decency, but in the slums. Most of them came from the slums of New York and San Francisco. The fact is further proven when we consider that liberties are readily taken on the ballroom floor that are not taken for granted anywhere else in decent society. The modern dancer takes the girl's right hand in his left. He puts his arm round her waist. She either puts her arm upon his shoulder or round his neck. They do not stand side by side as they did in the old-time waltz. They stand face to face. As a rule, they are clasped in the closest embrace. This is the case regardless of where the

dance is held. This embrace is made further dangerous by the very limited costume in which the modern girl dresses herself. She does not dare wear on the ballroom what her sister of a few years ago wore. She would lose her popularity as a dancer. The young men would call her "Old Ironsides," and pass her by.

Mark you, in saying this I am not declaring that every girl who dances is immoral. That is not the case. I am not even declaring that every man who dances is immoral. But what I do declare is this: that the tendency of the modern dance is to take the fine edge off the modesty of both young men and young women. A blacksmith can no more handle the tools of his trade without hardening his hands than a girl can be clasped in the embrace of promiscuous men and still keep her sensitiveness to the questionable and to the unclean. When we consider, therefore, the thousands that are engaging night after night in the modern dance, our wonder is not that so many go wrong, but rather that so many hold their footing upon such slippery places.

(3) Then the auto has played its part. We make no wholesale condemnation of the auto, no more than we would of the moving picture. To do so would be ridiculous. It is not the picture and it is not the car that hurts. It is the misuse of them.

The misuse of the auto is this: that it has taken the place of the drawing room and of the parlor for many of our young people. You and I did our courting very largely in the home of the girl's father and mother. Many modern courtships are carried on in autos that are parked by the roadside or turned out into dim byways. Some of these cars are occupied by those old in the ways of sin, but many of them are occupied by boys and girls yet in their teens. And here again the wonder is not that some go wrong, but that so many escape.

2. A second cause that has had its influence upon our present generation is the changed conditions of our home life. Far more of the present generation have grown up in the city than of the generation just passing. My own boyhood was spent far back in the backwoods. There were many advantages that I missed, but the temptations that I escaped were more still. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that my upbringing in the open country, with its hard work, with its rare and wholesome holidays, made life far less dangerous for me than the conditions that surround my own boys make for them.

Then the present day has witnessed a fearful letting down in both home religion and home authority. Amidst the hurrying rush of to-day we

have not time to live with our children. We have not time for the family altar. We have not time to control them. A good many present-day fathers and mothers have practically no control whatever over their boys and girls. This is obvious. Many a father has to borrow his own car, and many a mother is as utterly powerless to keep her daughter from associations to which she objects as if she were a rank outsider. Of course this is not the fault of the young people themselves. It is the fault of the parents.

3. A third influence that has had to do with the present generation is the new freedom that has come to women. The woman of to-day is in a far larger way than ever before doing a man's work and living a man's life. She can do to-day with impunity what her sister of a few years ago could not have done except at the price of disgrace. To this larger freedom I am making no objection. I believe in it with all my heart. But there is no denying that this new freedom has made the modern young woman a bit different from her sister of a few years ago. Our highly seasoned amusements, our changed home life, the new freedom that has come to women, have surely given us a generation of youth a bit unlike any we have seen up to this time.

III

Now, this, as I understand it, is the day in which we live. In such circumstances has your lot been cast. "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

1. This is a word for parents and teachers and pastors. We shall not solve our problems by heaping abuse upon the heads of our young people. This course would be folly, in the first place, because they are not the ones to blame. If our amusements, for instance, are not what they ought to be, it is not our youth who are at fault. They did not make them, neither are they the only ones who patronize them. Let a notoriously bad show come to Memphis and the theater will be crowded. But the crowd will not be made up of young people. I think it safe to say that the majority present will be adults. I think it safe to say further that of those adults present, the majority will be women. The reason, therefore, that the obscene show lives is because we who are older show our appreciation and our approval not only by failing to protest, but by actually attending.

Again, if our home life is not what it ought to be, our youth are not to blame. If there is no family altar, the fault is not theirs. If the home atmosphere is not sweetened by the breath of

prayer, it is not they that are to blame, but ourselves. The same is true if there is no respect for parental authority. It is worse than useless for parents to try to compel their children to a respect for right authority when they themselves are devoid of that respect. What a pathetic spectacle to see parents trying to command the respect and obedience of their sons and daughters when those same sons and daughters know that the parents are themselves breakers of the law. If you keep illicit liquor, if you align yourself with that diabolical and dangerous outlaw, the bootlegger, do not be surprised and do not criticize if your children grow up without any respect for law, either your own or another's.

Not only are we not to criticize our youth, because whatever is wrong with our day is our fault and not theirs; we are to refuse to give ourselves to criticism because that alone is no solution to our problems. If we save our youth from the dangers that beset them, we must offer a positive remedy. For instance, if we are to save them from amusements that tarnish and destroy, we cannot expect to do so by abolishing all forms of amusement. We have got to give them something better. We cannot overcome evil with evil. The only way that we can win is to roll against it a great tide of good. If we save our young people from ob-

scene laughter, we must of necessity help them to laughter that is clean and wholesome. Above all else we must bring them to know Him who has come to give us life in abundance.

In the second place, if we save them from the harm that comes from the failure of our present-day home life, we must make our homes more Christian. If we expect them to obey, we ourselves must be obedient to the laws of God and to the laws of man. We must make this a matter of conscience. We cannot scourge our youth into loyalty to the things that are highest when we ourselves are disloyal. But if we are willing to pay the price of becoming moral and spiritual leaders, we can lead them to the goal of our desires. And we can accomplish this task in no other way.

2. Then this text is a challenge to our youth. Especially is it a challenge to every young woman. This is not an altogether easy day in which to live. It is a day fraught with temptations and with dangers. But for that very reason, it is a great day. It is a day of tremendous opportunities. Above all else, it is your day. God has timed your coming for this strenuous hour. He has placed you in this trying situation. "Thou hast come to the kingdom for such a time as this." Since you are here at the call of Jesus Christ, you may rec-

ognize at once that your task is the part of helping and not of hindering. It is the part of lifting the load and not of dragging down. It is the part of making life more clean and sane and wholesome. It is the part of standing loyally by your ideals and not of striking your flag to the gods of the coarse and vulgar.

To do this requires courage. You have to stand against custom. You have to refuse to do what it seems that the crowd is doing. That is never easy. It is always hard to stand alone. It is always hard to travel a road that is different from that trodden by the feet of the multitude. If we resist the argument for the cheap and the vulgar that is given so often—"Everybody's doing it"—we must have a fine type of Christian courage.

You will need courage, in the second place, because to be obedient to God's plan requires at times that you go against your natural desire to be popular. I seldom preach on dancing that some girl does not write me that she does not believe in it, but that she cannot endure to be a wall-flower. I always know that such girls are in danger of believing that the road to real popularity is the way of cheapness. Many a girl is making that mistake. She has come to the conclusion that the way to have many admirers is to be of the "devil-may-care" type.

Such a girl makes a mistake for two reasons.

(1) In the first place, if that were the road to real popularity, she could not afford to travel it because the price is too great. There are some shows that you may fancy are very good, but the admission is too high. There are some prizes that you may consider of real value, but the cost leaves you forever impoverished.

(2) Then she is mistaken, in the second place, because such conduct does not make for real popularity. No man with an ounce of worth in him values a girl more because she is coarse in her language. Swearing in inexcusable in men. It is utterly disgusting in women. I have yet to find a man who was seeking a wife refuse to consider any woman as eligible who did not smoke cigarettes. I have yet to find one single manly man searching for a girl to share life's joys and sorrows with him who accepted a girl because they had both been drunk together. The cheap girl is not popular. She is only the temporary plaything of foolish and muddy-minded men.

A woman died in England a few years ago. When she lay in state thousands passed to have one more look at her face. When the long procession was ended, it is said that her shroud was as wet as if it had been dipped in the sea. It was soaked in the grateful tears of those whom she had

served. And I had rather go up to meet my Lord in that tear-soaked shroud than to be clad in the rarest finery that wealth can give. There is much to be done. "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

THE YOUNG MAN

"And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." (Mark 14:51, 52.)

"And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." (Isa. 32:2.)

THESE texts bring before us two different types of character. The first is a despoiler. He does not protect; he pillages. He does not defend; he endangers. Both by virtue of what he is and by virtue of what he does, he makes life harder for the other fellow. He carries with him an atmosphere that lowers the moral temperature of the world. By his very personality he makes it harder to climb and easier to descend; harder to be good and easier to be bad; harder to be clean and easier to be unclean. The second type is just the opposite. Both by virtue of what he is and by virtue of what he does, he is a protector. He makes it easier for us to love and harder for us to hate. He makes it easier for us to be at our best and harder for us to be at our worst. His

very presence changes desert into garden, and sets the fields of the soul to flowering.

I

Look at this first picture: "And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him. And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." The soldiers with the mob are on the way out to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus.

As they pass down one of the narrow streets of Jerusalem a certain young man who is preparing for bed hears the turmoil and is eager to know what is happening. He opens the door to a slit and shouts an inquiry to the passers-by. "We are going to arrest a criminal," the answer comes back. He is about to shut the door, but he decides to ask one more question. "What is the criminal's name?" "Jesus of Nazareth," is the answer, and the crowd hurries on.

This young man waits to learn no more. The information has electrified him. His face is suddenly set into lines of stern determination. He is caught in the grip of a great purpose. He is not dressed, but he will not take time for that. He knows this man who is about to be arrested. He

has heard him speak. He has seen him open blinded eyes. He has been brought under the power of his compelling winsomeness. He has come to love him. Therefore, he cannot suffer him to be arrested without protest. So he seizes a linen sheet and wraps it about his body and rushes out into the night.

What is the matter with this young man? He is under the spell of Jesus. Did you ever notice how many of those that Jesus gathered about him were young men? This is accounted for partially by the fact that Jesus himself was young. It is accounted for in far larger measure by the fact that the daring task to which he addresses himself, and to which he calls others, is one that makes an eternal appeal to the heart of youth. The best that is in youth feels the lure and the challenge of Jesus in all generations. This young man determines at any cost to go to Jesus and stand by him, and, if need be, die with him.

He reaches the garden just as they are preparing to lead his Master away. But with a noble disregard of consequences, he hurries to take his place at his side. Just then he encounters a group of young men. They are not there, I dare say, as enemies of Jesus. Nor are they there as his friends. They are mere onlookers. They are neutrals. They are not there for any special harm.

But most of the harm in the world, I think, is done by those who do not mean any. These young men lay hold upon their strangely costumed young friend. Possibly they are amused at his amazing madness. The young fellow suddenly comes to himself, forgets his high quest, is covered with shame and confusion, and flees away naked into the dark.

Now what have these young fellows done who stand there holding the linen cloth in their hands? Possibly they are shaking with laughter. They think that they have played a good joke. But they are mistaken. They have committed a crime. They have perpetrated a tragedy. They have found a young man facing toward Jesus and they have caused him to face in the opposite direction. They have found a young man with courage to dare all for the sake of Jesus, and they have robbed him of that courage and left him a coward. They have found one of their fellows with fine enthusiasms burning hot upon the altar of his soul and they have utterly quenched his fire and left him without zeal and without any high and holy passion.

When I was in Webb's School, years ago, I knew a boy named Tom Albright. Tom was working his way through school. He could not dress as well as many. One day he came to school

wearing a coat that was out at the elbow. One young fellow, seeing that Tom's elbow was peeping out, ran his finger into the hole and tore it larger. Some of the fellows laughed. So another slipped up and made it larger still. When Tom went home that night, one sleeve of his coat was almost gone. The perpetrators of this ugly piece of cruelty were only thoughtless boys. Therefore, we try to forgive them, though it is hard.

But there are many of us who are older grown who are guilty of far worse. We would not tear a man's worn coat, but we would take advantage of his moral weakness. That young friend of yours never went prayerless to his bed before he met you, but now he is ashamed to pray. He had never soiled his lips with an oath, but now he is swearing as if he had gone to the pit for his schooling. His thoughts were clean, but now they are as foul as the nest of a vulture. You have robbed him. You have robbed him of something infinitely more priceless than gold. In so doing, you have not enriched yourself, but you have made him poor indeed.

What is your record in this matter? We are not as disappointed in the young man of to-day as we are in the young woman. But this does not mean that the young man is always a paragon of purity. It rather grows out of the fact that we

have been accustomed to expect much of the young woman and all too little of the young man. Some time ago I heard one excuse base and unmanly conduct on the part of a young fellow by simply saying, "Oh well, young men will be young men," as if manliness were a synonym for moral rottenness. We do not employ such palliating language when a girl goes wrong. Yet, why not? To say that a young man is only normal when he is a moral leper, while a young woman is only normal when she is clean, is to preach a doctrine as unfair as it is dangerous and devilish. I believe we are coming to realize the truth of this to-day more than ever before.

There was a time when almost the whole moral responsibility was put upon the woman. If a wrong was done, the fault was hers, not his. It was expected of him that he go as far as he could. I do believe that we are improving on that. We are coming to the realization that if sin there is, it is the sin of both. We are coming to realize further that in the majority of cases by far the greater fault attaches to the man. We do not hear that silly maxim as much as we once did: "A girl can have any conduct from a man that she wants." I am glad that this is true, because such a statement is a colossal falsehood.

First, it is not true on its better side. This

does not mean that there is not some truth in it. It would not be so dangerous if it were altogether false. The attitude of the girl has much to do with the attitude of the man. But it is not always true that a girl can get any conduct from a man that she desires. There are many girls who are lily white who are politely insulted in business offices and elsewhere again and again. But they have to stand for it because the weight of economic responsibility rests upon their shoulders. They have the burden of the support both of themselves and others upon them. They endure because they feel that they must.

Then it is not true on its baser side. Thank God, it is not. There are men to-day, and I am constrained to believe that their number is increasing, that will not cheapen themselves even if they happen to find themselves in the company of a cheap girl. And it is only such as these that have any right to the title of gentleman. If you steal from my pocketbook and have no better excuse for it than that I was careless, you will not be counted as an honest man, but a thief. And if you take advantage of another's weakness, and have no better excuse than the carelessness of your victim, then you are not a gentleman. You are just a despoiler with the heart of a jackal.

II

Will you now look at this other picture: "A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Of course this prophecy is fulfilled in its completeness only by Jesus Christ himself. He is the supreme protector. There is nothing that these weak lives of ours need for shelter and defense that we do not find in him. He is strength for our weakness. He is comfort for our loneliness. Above all else, he is a cure for our sin. He comes to heal the tragic quarrel between the soul and God. We can sing of him in confidence:

> "O God, our help in ages past,
> Our hope for years to come,
> Our shelter from the stormy blast,
> And our eternal home."

But while this text is fulfilled in its completeness only in Jesus, it puts amazing possibilities within reach of every one of us. It is our privilege to share in the nature of Christ. We are to become partakers of the divine nature. Sharing in his nature, we are, quite naturally, to share in his power for serving. "The works that I do shall ye do also." Hence this text becomes a pic-

ture of man as God means him to be. Its heights are majestic, but they may be scaled by our stumbling feet. Its treasures are bewilderingly rich and winsome, but they may be gripped by our fumbling hands. The man here described is the man that God sees in you and in me.

1. "A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind." I have seen the hot winds blow over certain parts of the West till the blades of corn rolled and withered. I have seen it blow till the cotton blossoms spilled their beauty upon the parched ground. I have seen it blow till every green and growing thing was seared as if touched by living fire. And I have seen the hot winds of temptation and passion thus blow over a human life. I have seen them blow till the flowers of beauty were withered; till the blossoms of purity and the buds of hope were all but dead. What is the cure for this wind-swept life? There is only one cure. And that is to be brought to Christ through one who is as a hiding place from the wind.

2. "He shall be as a covert from the tempest." The word 'tempest" here means a storm of rain. It is one of those sudden downpours that sometimes completely overwhelms the traveler. "Thou carriest them away as with a flood." At the best it leaves him drenched and chilled and depressed. And this protecting man is to be a shelter from

the tempest. He is to keep the chill from our hearts by a brotherly love and sympathy. He is to help us keep the candle of hope and expectancy burning in our souls by his own high courage. He shall, by the help of Christ, be as a covert from the tempest.

Of course this is no less true if we understand the tempest to mean such storms as we know in our own land. What a power is the tempest! Some months ago I passed through the track of a cyclone. Nothing was left upright in that pathway of ruin. Giants of the forest had crashed to the earth, wrecking and deforming the green and growing life about them. There seemed nothing that the tempest had not touched to mar or to destroy. And I have seen the fierce tempest of sin and hate sweep the world till it was billowed with graves; till its rivers were swollen and crimsoned with tears and blood. I have seen this same tempest play havoc with the individual life. What is the remedy? It is in man, the Christ-filled man who has been made by his power, as a covert from the tempest.

3. He shall be "as rivers of water in a dry place." There are dry places in our world. There are desert spots where no flowers bloom and where no wheat fields grow golden, and where no birds sing. And there are moral deserts, too. There

are dry places about us, all too many. Some are in our city. Some are in our home. Some are in our own hearts. And what makes the situation even more pathetic is that these desert spots are needlessly dry and barren. There is the possibility of a rich and luxurious garden in every one of them. Every one of them is capable of growing the rarest of flowers, even the flowers of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control.

How is this glorious transformation to be wrought? How is desert to be changed into garden? "The Winning of Barbara Worth" is by no means a great book. But it has some charm and grip because it gives us a picture of the reclaiming of a bit of the desert country of the West. We cannot look upon that worthful work without being fascinated. But there is a task more fascinating than this. It is the reclaiming of moral deserts. And that high capacity God has locked within your heart and mine. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within his inner life shall flow rivers of living water." And where such a man works, barren wastes will become fruitful fields and the desert will rejoice and blossom as a rose.

4. He shall be "as the shadow of a great rock

in a weary land." This is of course a desert picture. You can see the caravan as it winds its way across the burning wastes. From out a hot and copper sky the sun is shooting them with arrows of fire. Over to the windward a simoon is gathering that threatens to put its smothering arms round them. They are already tortured by thirst and half blinded by the drifting sand. But suddenly hope springs in their hearts. They see a great rock in the distance. A little later they are resting under its shadow. The sun's rays no longer burn them. The whirling sand can no longer reach them. A spring offers its life-giving waters, and they are safe from the enemy that threatened their lives.

Now, says the Prophet, a man shall be like that. He shall arrest the drift. He shall stand rock-like between his brother and the foe that threatens his ruin. And we have been privileged to know men like that, every one of us. I myself have taken refuge under the shelter of such more than once. Not only so, but I have seen whole communities find shelter under such a Spirit-filled personality.

Such a man was Phillips Brooks. Some years ago he was spending a Sabbath in a mining town in the far West. On Sunday morning he received a note from one of the miners. It was blackened

by coal dust and poorly written. But this is what it said: "Dear Mr. Brooks: I am not going to Church to-day. I never go to Church. But I just wanted to tell you that I am not drunk this morning because you are in town." That is the meaning of this text. The great preacher was "a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." May that same high vocation be yours and mine!

IN-LAWS

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." (Ruth 1:16.)

I

A FRIEND told me recently that he had not read a love story since leaving college. That is a calamity. It is like living on the seashore where raging waves fight with rugged rocks, and yet never turning your eyes to see, nor allowing your ears to be attentive to its manifold voices. It is like neighboring with a flower garden and yet refusing to delight yourself with the glory of its color or with the sweetness of its perfume. It is like passing thirst-parched by some brimming spring and failing to give yourself the joy of kissing the spring upon the lips. It is like dwelling under the shadow of magnificent mountains and yet never lifting your eyes to where their tall heads hood themselves in snow and shimmer under the kiss of the sunlight. In my opinion, everybody ought to give themselves the joy and thrill of reading some of the best love stories.

The Bible recognizes this need. Hence it contains some of the sweetest love stories ever told. For instance, there is the love story between a man and a maiden. We do not like Jacob in the least when we first meet him. But, unless romance and poetry have utterly died within us, we cannot but thrill over the story of his love for Rachel. As a fugitive far from home, he meets her at the well. Her cheeks are fairer than any blossoms that bloom and her laughter is more musical than the water in the well. "Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept." I have never been quite able to decide on the cause for those tears, but I take it that they were tears of sheer joy. Then there is the love between one man and another, as the love of Jonathan for David and David for Jonathan. We should have to go far before we should find a more winsome story than that.

But the sweetest love story in the Bible, and, so far as I know, about the sweetest in the literature of the world, is not the story of the love between a man and a woman, it is not the story of a love between one man and another; it is the story of a love between two women. And these two women do not stand in the sweet and intimate relation of mother and daughter. They do not bear even the relationship of sisters. It is not even the story of

the love of women of equal age. It is the love of age for youth and youth for age. It is the love of June for November and of November for June. And what is stranger still, it is the love of a daughter-in-law for a mother-in-law, and of a mother-in-law for a daughter-in-law.

Now, it is only fair to confess that "in-laws" do not always love each other as they should. The word "mother," for instance, is one of the sweetest in the language. Her name is the one that we most frequently lisp in the days of childhood. When we are glad and life is full of song, we call to her to share our joy. When sick in body or sick in soul, her name is the first upon our lips. Even as we reach the sere and yellow leaf, her name still has power to stir some of our sweetest and holiest memories. But this tender and winsome word tends to lose all its music and to become utter discord the moment it becomes hyphenated. "Mother"—how winsome, as a mocking-bird singing among the apple blossoms! "Mother-in-law"—how discordant, as clanging instruments played out of tune!

If "in-laws" in general are not always popular, the mother-in-law is the least popular. Has there ever been a civilized people where she was not heartily lampooned? Was there ever a land where she was not the target for the biting jest of the

mocker? Is it not true that a very large percentage of all the jokes that are in existence to-day were made at her expense? And is it not further true that the vast majority of these jokes are bitter and disparaging rather than otherwise? Take any of them, and their name is legion! Here, for instance, is a telegram sent by a son-in-law to a fellow-sufferer: "Our mother-in-law is lying at the gate of death. Come and help pull her through!" The fact that so many and so sharp thrusts have been made at the mother-in-law is an indication in itself that she is by no means "as popular as Santa Claus."

II

What is the secret of her unpopularity?

The fault, let us acknowledge at once, is partly her own. She has done much to merit the unkind thrusts that the wits of the centuries have made at her. She has to her credit the wrecking of not a few homes that might have got on well had she only departed this life or lived abroad. But, while this is true, it is also only fair to say that the fault is not hers alone. She has at times been as much sinned against as sinning. Sometimes she has been in part a victim of circumstances. Her situation is more trying than that of the father-in-law

because her contact is more intimate. Even where she had been a red rag in the face of marital happiness, this is often caused by a lack of thoughtfulness, of tact, and of understanding rather than from innate and deliberate wickedness. In proof of this contention, it is only necessary to call attention to the fact that mother and mother-in-law are after all the same woman. Every woman who is a mother-in-law must of necessity be a mother first. Therefore, if the mother is all that is winsome and tender and lovable, we need not claim that the mother-in-law is always the opposite. For they are, I repeat, the same woman. The only difference between them is this: that as a mother-in-law the mother is acting in a new rôle, and she is being seen through different eyes.

1. Her new rôle. It is often a very delicate and difficult one. She is called upon to be a mother to one who is really not her own. That task requires a fund of tact and forbearance and broadmindedness and good sense that every woman does not possess. It also demands a love big enough to cover a multitude of faults. And there are countless women who are playing this difficult part with most beautiful success. It is not unusual to find those who regard the parents of their husband or wife with an affection little less than that given to their own father and mother. But such is not

always the case. Sometimes a very successful mother makes a very blundering mother-in-law.

2. Not only is she playing a new rôle, but she is being seen through different eyes. As a mother she has been viewed through the kind and loving eyes of her own children. As a mother-in-law she is being viewed through the eyes of one who has another mother. She is being constantly compared with that other mother. It is not at all surprising that she sometimes suffers by comparison. It is not at all surprising that she does not seem so agreeable nor so winsome nor so lovable as that other mother that looked the love-light into their eyes in their young and tender years. Many a woman who seems all but faultless when seen through the eyes of her own children, appears very faulty when seen through the eyes of the wife of her son or the husband of her daughter.

III

In the story that we have before us there was every reason to expect that the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law would be anything but pleasant. Had you asked me what I thought of the possibilities of their getting on together, I should have answered that they were very faint indeed. This I should have done for the following reasons:

1. Naomi and Ruth were of different nationalities. Naomi had not come to dwell in Moab as a matter of choice. She had come very much against her will. There had been a sore famine in her native land of Judah. She and her husband with their two sons had had a hard time keeping the wolf from the door. But her heartache in leaving her home was not on her own account, nor yet was it on account of her husband. It was because of her two boys. She did not want to bring them up in a pagan land. Above all else she did not want them to break the law of Moses by marrying pagan women. She felt that if such a thing should happen it would break her heart and bring her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

But she had not been long in the land of her adoption till she saw that it was very likely to happen. The boys had both fallen in love. Then followed seasons of secret prayer. Then followed heart-to-heart talks with her sons that grew more and more painful as she realized the futility of her efforts to change their minds. For in that far-away day there was little use to talk to a young man, or a young woman either for that matter, once they had made up their minds that they were in love. And I for one do not think there has been much change. You had about as well try to blow out the sun at noon as to try to convince a

young fellow that he ought not to marry a certain girl with whom he is madly in love. Naomi did her best. She let her son know very definitely that the marriage was undesirable so far as she was concerned. But the marriage took place just the same.

Now it is possible that Naomi had told her headstrong son that the marriage would be a failure. In case she had, she is in the best possible position to make her prophecy come true, and to be thus enabled to say, "I told you so." She might, for instance, have allowed the fact that her son married against her will to have embittered her. She might have refused to have recognized Ruth at all. Or she might have set herself to the task of finding fault. She might have pointed out the fact that her unwelcome daughter-in-law did everything at the wrong time and in the wrong way. She might have informed her son that as a cook his wife was a travesty, and as a housekeeper a crude joke. She might have informed him that the way in which she dressed was a positive disgrace.

Or Ruth might have taken a similar attitude toward her mother-in-law. It would have been the easiest thing possible for her to have resented the fact that Naomi did not at first welcome the marriage. If Naomi was like the other members of

her race, she thought herself far better than the heathenish Moabites. The Moabites in turn doubtless thought themselves better than the Jews. So it would have been the easiest thing possible for these two to have scorned each other. I have seen this happen again and again. Sometimes, for instance, the mother-in-law impresses her son with the fact that he has married beneath himself. At times the wife is sure that her family is better than that of her husband. She may love him, but she scorns his kin. She declares, with a toss of her head, that she did not marry the whole family—she only married George. But she is mistaken. When she married, in a very real sense she married the whole family. And she will find it dreadfully hard to get on with George if she shows contempt for those who are bound to him by ties of blood. But these two women refused to allow difficulties growing out of their differing nationalities to separate them.

2. A second barrier that no doubt added to their difficulties was this: that they were of different religion. Ruth had been brought up in the pagan religion of the Moabites. Naomi had been trained in the pure and lofty religion of Jehovah. There was a chasm between them as wide as the spaces between the stars. It would have been exceedingly easy and even natural for Naomi to have

looked with utter scorn upon Ruth's religion. It would likewise have been very easy for Ruth to have looked with scorn and prejudice upon the religion of her mother-in-law. It would have been easy for Naomi to have driven Ruth into utter rebellion by arguing with her and nagging at her because of her religion. It would have been easy for Ruth to have been resentful of any slightest effort on the part of the other woman to influence her.

3. The final reason why I should have prophesied that Naomi and Ruth would not get on was the fact that they were much together. And, as a rule, it is not good for "in-laws" to be too much in each other's company. An ocean is oftentimes a helpful thing to keep up friendly relations between one "in-law" and another. But Naomi and Ruth saw much of each other. I have an idea that for a great part of the time they lived together. And how difficult it is for a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law to dwell at peace under the same roof! Truly it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. I do not think it ought ever to be undertaken unless absolutely necessary. But there are those who are big enough and good enough to succeed at it beautifully. And Naomi and Ruth were among this number. They got on

in spite of the fact that they saw much of each other.

IV

What is the secret of their success?

In answering this question, it is not safe to give the whole credit to either. That is a trifling, threadbare saying that it takes two to make a quarrel. It is equally true that it takes two to get on together. Wherever there is a happy marriage, both the husband and the wife share the credit for it. Wherever there is a beautiful friendship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, as in this story, the secret is found, not in the merit of one, but of both.

1. Much credit is due to Naomi. If she objected to the marriage, as no doubt she did, all objection was buried when she saw that it was beyond her power to prevent it. I do not think she stood out against her son and compelled him to run away in order to marry. Certainly when the marriage had been consummated, she did not stamp her foot and take a solemn vow that neither of the two young rebels should ever cross the threshold of her home. She took them both to her heart. She acted as if the marriage was of all others the one she was most eager for her son to make. When Ruth came to the home of her

mother-in-law, she was not embarrassed. I have an idea that Naomi had very little to say about the corrupt and corrupting religion in which Ruth had been reared. I have an idea that she did not have much to say about the beauty and superiority of her own religion. And Ruth saw her in the days of her joy. And she saw her when her heart was broken as she kneeled by her dead. And there was that about this woman that was irresistibly winsome.

2. Then Ruth played her part. She had not been in Naomi's home a day before she was convinced that her son had made a wise choice. I can hear her as she says to herself: "If she is not a worshiper of the God of Israel outwardly, already she worships him in heart. There is something about her that is a bit heavenly." You remember in Naomi's prayer for her she said: "The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me." Ruth was kind, which means that Ruth's relations with the mother of her husband were sweetened by love, for kindness is a child of love. Thus these two women were kind each to the other. Each gave the best to the other. Hence we are perplexed to this day to know the one to whom to give the greater credit for the beautiful love that blossomed and ripened between them.

V

What was the outcome of their success?

1. They came to be one nationally. When Naomi had buried her husband and both her sons, there were no longer any ties to hold her in Moab. She decided to return home. Her two daughters-in-law agreed to accompany her to the border of her own country. They make the journey together. Arrived at the place of separation, Naomi bids one of her daughters-in-law good-by. And as she takes her journey back home, she is sobbing, for she loves the mother of her dead husband with tender devotion. Now, it is Ruth's time. She flings her arms about the neck of Naomi and there she clings. But Orpah is going and Naomi does not want Ruth to have to go alone. So she seeks gently to unclasp her hands, urging her to go back with her sister. But Ruth clings only the tighter, and this bit of poetry bursts from her lips: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

Notice her declaration: "Thy people shall be my people." All her life up to this moment has been spent in the land of Moab. They are her people.

There where they dwell are those dear scenes which from day to day have caught the color of her life, and sympathized with her joys and sorrows. But now she is willing to give all that up—"Thy people shall be my people." How had she come to fall in love with Naomi's people? Answer: Naomi had been so winsome and so altogether lovable that Ruth had said in her heart that if the Jewish people are like my mother-in-law, I am resolved to live the remainder of my life among them.

2. They became one in their religion. Ruth not only said, "Thy people shall be my people," but "Thy God shall be my God." I do not know how much Naomi preached to Ruth. Very little at first, I imagine. But as Ruth watched Naomi live, as she saw the flowers of love and joy blooming in the garden of her heart, she began to wonder how she had ever come to grow such winsome blossoms. She began to ask questions and Naomi to explain, till by and by she came into the fullness of the light where she could make this fine confession of faith: "Thy God shall be my God."

3. Through their mutual devotion they became an unspeakable blessing to the world. It was Naomi that made it possible for Ruth to marry Boaz. Then one day the sweet angel of suffering came to the home of Boaz and Ruth and a little

child was born. "And Naomi took the child," the story tells us, "and laid it in her bosom and became nurse unto it." Now the name of that child was Obed. He was the father of Jesse and the grandfather of the songful David. And other years slipped by and "There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And this marvelous gift was made possible through two women who made a success out of the trying relationship of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

OLD FOLKS

"At evening time it shall be light." (Zech. 14:7.)

I

I THINK it is doing no great violence to this text to take it as a contradiction of our false fears. "At evening time," says the prophet, "it shall be light." That is not the usual view. We are not accustomed to think of the evening as a time of light, but of darkness. We do not expect the gloaming to bring us radiance in its dusky hands, but gloom. Such expectation is quite natural. At eventide the day is dead. At eventide the sun no longer hangs in our sky. Therefore it is not at all strange that we look toward the evening as a time of darkness rather than of light. Such is our thought of the evening of the day. Such is our thought of the evening of life.

This conception sobs through much of our poetry. Whatever brightness life holds belongs to its morningtide and not to its evening.

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to
close upon the growing boy."

That is, life's climax is reached in its beginning. Its finest joys are experienced in June and not in December.

"What are laurels and wreaths to the brow that is wrinkled?
'Tis but as dead flowers with May dew besprinkled.
Then away with all such from the head that is hoary,
What care I for wreaths that can only give glory?
The flowers that blossom at sweet two and twenty
Are worth all your laurels though ever so plenty."

It is not to be wondered, therefore, that many of us look upon old age with dread. It is not to be wondered at that we tax our ingenuity to the utmost to keep from growing old. Some of our efforts to keep young would be immensely ludicrous if they were not so pathetic. There are those who would not tell the date of their birth for any price. To ask after their age would be an insult. Yet they are deceiving nobody but themselves. The trouble with many such is that their friends in their guessing make them older than they are rather than younger. Then there are others who dress as if they were sixteen instead of sixty. Or they fancy that they can buy a bit of springtime at the drug store. God pity the old body who has no better safeguard against the oncoming of old age than can be found in paint and paste and flashy dress.

This text comes to tell us that old age is no

more to be dreaded than youth. It tells us that the evening time of life has a radiance all its own. It heartens us with the truth that the sunset may be as bright and winsome as the sunrise. Thus it puts a staff in our hands upon which to lean as we do "the toilsome journey of the last mile." Thus it puts a song in our souls whose melody gives us courage and joy as we approach the "sunset and the evening star." With this text singing in our hearts, the horrid ghosts that once haunted our conceptions of the evening of life are all banished. In its fellowship we may go on our way toward the twilight with serene confidence and joy.

II

"At evening time it shall be light." The fears that this text quiet are altogether natural fears. It is in no sense a matter of wonder that many of us dread to grow old. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the passing years rob us of many treasures that we would fain keep.

1. Old age means the weakening of our powers.

(1) It means the weakening of our physical powers. The strong man tends to lose his strength. The broad shoulders stoop. The keen ear is no longer skilled at hearing. The bright eye becomes dim. The brisk step loses its elas-

ticity. The man whose foot was tireless becomes easily wearied. The grasshopper becomes a burden and desire fails.

Old age robs us not only of our physical strength, but of our beauty also. However charming you are to-night, young girl, there will come a time, if you live long enough, when your lovely face will be charred and wrinkled. The suppleness will go out of your figure. The sparkle will go from your eyes. You will be a weary and withered old woman. No vestige of the physical charms of springtime will be yours. June with its roses will be only a memory. December with its weakness will be all that will be left. Safeguard yourself how you may, the highwayman, Old Age, will meet you one day and rob you of your physical power and your physical charms.

(2) Then the coming on of old age means the lessening of our mental powers. It means the waning of our abilities. The tongue of the orator loses its cunning. The pen of the writer loses its skill. The voice of the singer becomes cracked and discordant as a violin out of tune. We cannot think as we used to think. We cannot remember as we once remembered. "My God," said Dean Swift in his later years, as he looked at one of his own books, "what a genius I had when I wrote that book!" But he was not a genius any

more and he knew it. Time had in some measure blown out the light within his brain.

2. Old age, because it means the lessening of our powers, tends also to rob us of the joys of work. There are few things sadder to the aged than the growing consciousness that they are no longer fit to toil at the task. Work has been their joy through a long space of years. But now they are put on the sidetrack. And what is even harder to bear, they know that they deserve to be on the sidetrack. Of course there are certain high tasks at which they can work, even to the end of the way. There is also fine service that they can render. But they find it hard to feel it so. They are often depressed with a sense of uselessness.

I knew my father as an old man. He had been an eager toiler his whole life through. Toward the eventide I have seen him come in from doing a half day's work and sit down by my mother, and after a few moments of brooding silence he would say to her: "I do not seem to be able to do the day's work as I used to do it. I once could do more work than any boy I have, but I cannot do it any more, I am so easily tired." There were no tears in his eyes when he said it, but I knew there were tears in his heart. It was not easy for him to face the fact that he was no longer fit to be one of the world's workers.

3. Then old age tends to rob us of our power to dream. Every youth is by nature a seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams. Life is ahead of him. The noise of the conflict comes to him from beyond the hills. He sees happy valley hopes beyond the bend of the road. He is putting on his armor for the flight and he feels sure to win. Life is ahead. Love is ahead. His best dreams are yet unrealized.

But with the old body, except by the grace of God, it is not true. He no longer feels "the wild pulsations that he felt before the strife when he heard his days before him in the tumult of his life." He is not putting his armor on. He is putting it off from a body that has had many a thrust and bears many a scar. He no longer builds castles in the air. He has found that the castles he builded in youth did not materialize. At best they became only a homely wooden house by the side of the road where he has laughed sometimes and wept at other times; where he has romped with the living, watched by the beds of the sick and kneeled by the coffins of the dead. His best days, so far as this world is concerned, "have dropped into the sunset."

4. Then old age is naturally lonely. The old body who has come to threescore years and ten has far more friends on life's other side than on

this side. He has known many a good-by. Farewell has been often upon his pain-pinched lips. Most of those with whom he locked arms in the springtime are gone and he walks amidst the snows of winter in large measure alone.

"I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door,
And again
The pavement stones resound
As he totters o'er the ground
With his cane.

They say that in his prime
Ere the pruning knife of Time
Cut him down
Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
'They are gone.'

The mossy marbles rest
O'er the lips that he has prest
In their bloom
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb."

5. Then old age means the near approach of death. Death may be very close to you who are in the springtime of life. It may be very near to

you who walk amidst the noontide hush of midsummer. But it is certainly near to you who have come to December. The sentence of death has gone out against the aged as inevitably as that pronounced against the culprit at the bar. "The days of our years are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

III

For whom is this true?

"At evening time it shall be light." It is evident that this text is not meant for everybody. There is an old age that is as dark as that woven out of the warp and woof of decay and death. I think I have never looked upon a more tragic sight than an old body who has grown old in sin. I have seen weak hands that had grown palsied toiling at a task of folly. I have seen shoulders that have become stooped and bent earthward and graveward from carrying a load of vanity. I can think of nothing more black with utter darkness than to come down to life's evening with a heart that has never learned to trust, and with lips that have never learned to pray.

If you have grown old without Christ, you are

likely to be without him forever. For old age means fixedness. If you have formed the habit in youth and middle life of being harsh and critical, it is likely that it will be next to impossible to live with you when you have grown old. If you give yourself to the things of the world during your youth and middle life, then the grip of the world will be almost unbreakable when you come down to old age. The cynic will be more cynical. The miser will be more miserly.

There lived near my home when I was a boy a man who had given himself body and soul to the accumulation of money. His whole lookout on life was bounded by a dollar. One day he was paralyzed. He lay upon his bed utterly helpless. He had his gold put under his pillow. He was unwilling that a single dollar of it be taken even to pay the expenses of the family. When my father went to see him he refused to talk about the final adventure that he was soon to make. He was writhing in helpless rage because his wife had been compelled to take a bit of his money by force in order to buy bread and medicine. The issues of eternity counted nothing for him. In the blackness of the evening shadows he bewailed the fact that his household had become, in his own language, "a den of thieves and robbers."

This text is obviously not for the Christless, but

for the Christlike. It is a text for those who have learned amidst the splendors of the noonday to trust in God. It is true for the aged saint who is enabled by the grace of God to sing: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me. . . . Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

IV

Why is this true for God's saints?

1. It is true because of the companionship of Jesus. Old age, I said, is naturally lonely because so many of the friends of other years have slipped away. But there is one Friend who has not gone. There is one arm that, though locked with yours at eighteen, may still be locked in yours at eighty. Many faces have changed. You feel yourself at times among strangers. But there is One who is unchanged and unchanging. And that One is Jesus Christ. He alone is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is at your side; and because

he is here, you can never feel yourself utterly alone.

I went some years ago at the invitation of a brother minister to pay a pastoral visit. On our way he told me of the one that we were going to see. He said she had once been a woman with a husband and a large family of children. But the husband had died and the children had followed one by one. Then poverty had come. Then disease. And now the lonely old woman was sitting in an invalid's chair in her home of poverty.

As I heard her story I naturally thought of some words of consolation that I should try to speak to her during our visit. But when we reached the humble little cabin and the pastor presented me, I saw that my rôle was to be that of a listener rather than that of a preacher. The invalid began to talk and there was a radiance in her face and a note of sincere gladness in her voice that I have never forgotten. First she spoke of her neighbors, and they were all good neighbors. Then she passed on to speak of that other Friend, the one that sticketh closer than a brother. She told how that when sorrows had come, when the strong arm of her husband was dropped from about her stooped shoulders, she felt round about her and underneath her the Everlasting Arm.

As I listened I glanced about the bare walls of

the room. There was only one decoration: a cheap little placard which, if it had been in your home, you would doubtless have burned. And on that placard were these words: "Christ is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, and the silent listener to every conversation." And this faded old woman was a living proof of the fact, through the presence of Christ, that at evening time it shall be light.

2. Then the evening of life is bright because the presence of Jesus means immortal youth. It is not a decaying body that makes us old. It is a decaying soul. The house you live in is sure to totter and become a wreck after a while. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Here is the secret of abiding youth, and there is no other secret. To the soul that walks with God December can never come. Such a heart must forever remain full of spring. His sun ever hangs in the morning sky. His feet brush the dewy flowers of life's springtime.

3. The evening of life is bright for the saint because his best days are ahead. God never intended that life should be an anticlimax. He ex-

pects that in middle life and in old age as well as in youth we shall be able to say, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Our finest adventures are not behind us, but before us. Our richest joys are not of yesterday, but of to-morrow. The youth has a great future, but so has the aged body on whose wrinkled face the sundown's rays are falling:

> "Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life, for which the first was made:
> Our times are in His hand
> Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

To you who are in life's springtime to-night I give congratulations. Your best days are yet ahead. To you who are in the sere and yellow leaf I give congratulations that are no less enthusiastic. You are getting near life's greatest adventure. You are getting near upon life's most thrilling discovery. You are very near home. You are very near the meeting with those that you have loved long since and lost awhile. Soon you will kiss those lips for which your heart has hungered for more than half a century. Soon you will clasp once more the one whose homegoing left a void that the world has never been able to fill. Soon you will reach that good land where

they will give your lost youth back again, where the flowers of a vanished springtime will blossom in immortal freshness and beauty.

"One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er:
I am nearer my home to-day
Than I ever have been before.
Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down;
Nearer leaving the cross;
Nearer gaining the crown."